



鉄壳のアーマー

CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

11 インパクト・ガールズ

雨木シュウスケ

SYUSUKE AMAGI



ファンタジア文庫

メイファー・シュタット事件。
グレンダン史上に残る、希有な事件

鋼壳のレギオス

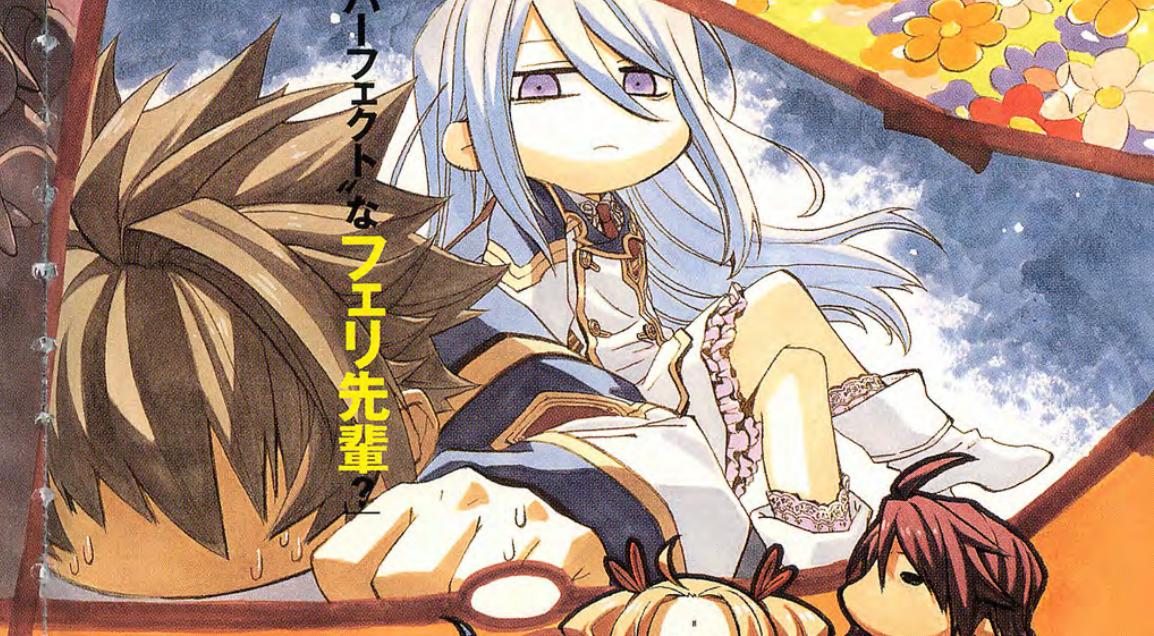
CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

11 インパクト・ガールズ

「幼なじみの
リンちゃん?
？」



「ザ・パーフェクトなフエリ先輩？」



「ミイ……んの……?」



マイっち、
ライバルは手強いの
ばっかだよ!?

「それとも苦楽を共にしてる
二十一隊長?」

うくん迷えるレイフォンの
ハートをつかむのは、誰だ!?

『ハッピーバースデイ!!』



Happy Hot Dash

Crap, I told a big lie.

It was too late to regret, the words that were uttered were like water that had been poured, with no way to take them back. Ed Delong could only blankly watch the scene that had been caused by his words -- the girl's shock, as her excitement and expectations shattered in an instant -- but not long after, however you looked at it, only despair was left.

"Is this for real, Ed-san?"

In her childlike, expectant eyes appeared a bit of moisture. Now she looked like she was going to cry, with her cheeks reddening and her breathing becoming labored.

Ed had no way of enduring the current mood.

(I guess I'll apologize)

The calm portion of his mind reached this conclusion, urging himself. To avoid the crisis before him, only this way was left.

"I'm sorry, I lied."

"Eh... what did you say?"

Thinking about it, maybe this way it was possible to reconcile. But it seemed like it would definitely fail. After "Eh... what did you say?" could follow "Impossible!" or "No way!", even a yelled "Go die!" that would strike a deadly blow to him.

That stimulating and moist gaze might become dry and ruthless, which would pierce through Ed's heart with lightning speed.

In that case... forget it.

But, if right now he chose to say something to escape the situation, her expectations would only increase. If there was no way to respond to those expectations, the reverse effect would become quite terrifying. Meaning not just a hateful exclamation of "Go die!", but an even truer exclamation of "DIE--!" - that kind of thing.

Regarding this, Ed was well aware of it. But, he said this.

"Don't worry, just watch this! In any case, he and I are friends!"

"Wa~, really, please let it be true!"

The girl excitedly grabbed Ed's hand. Her face was very close, though normally she would never come that close. Having her draw close so rapidly, Ed's let himself get entirely carried away.

"I guarantee it!"

With that, he felt a rising sense of heaven as he opened wide the great doors to hell.

Ah~~~ what should be done?

The tense mood made Ed feel like he had a hole in his stomach. Even though his stomach had no such hole, he was so terrified he might cough up blood soon.

At lunchtime, Ed would always buy a high-grade bento from the bento store. But for this bento, he had almost not moved his chopsticks. In the bento store arrived a famous working girl, but he had not joined the row of her fans. Regardless, right now Ed did not know what sort of girl she was.

The whole world had already been covered in darkness.

Right now it was the so-called saying "the future is dark", that Ed could emphasize with.

(Why, why did I say that kind of thing?)

Self-review -- Ed Delong, an ordinary member of the general public. Body slightly shorter than the average male, though weight is slightly higher. Body type need not be mentioned, and looks... it's enough to say that examining from a different angle, there's nothing special.

Self-review only added to his self-disgust. Because the weight known as fear of failure was tossing around in his stomach, Ed only glanced at the dishes of his bento, before starting to hate it.

He closed the lid.

"You're not eating?"

A voice suddenly came from behind him, startling Ed so much that he almost jumped. The voice turned out to be from the surrounding people, which Ed had seemingly not been able to hear. Actually, he hadn't heard a word from the conversation of the friends who were eating with him.

But, this voice was an exception. Because this voice was the one that had totally given rise to this culprit, that devilish voice.

"Y, yo!"

To reply, Ed forced a weak greeting.

"You're by yourself today?"

Truly, there was hardly a time when the devil was alone. He always led around three girls from his class who were like his attendants, but today it was just him.

"Ah, today I'm a bit..."

On the devil's face emerged a subtle smile, and his speech became somewhat vague. He showed a cute expression worthy of studying, as if he wanted to help a small girl -- Ed found that kind of expression nauseating.

(All popular people should go die!)

Curse words surged from his chest, but his mouth would never say them. Before, he had seen Military Arts as well as violence between ordinary people. Even if there were some cases in which it was wrong to use Military Arts, for the vast majority of cases it was favorable to have Military Arts.

No, maybe those words wouldn't cause that big of a problem, but the girls in the class would definitely become hostile to him. When the three girls who always stuck to the devil weren't there, there were many girls who wanted to seize the chance to get in a word with him.

(Ah, ah, it really is...)

This devil... in the end, what was so good about Layfon? Ed wondered from his heart.

Looks were merely okay, as was his height, and his well-proportioned limbs. No matter how you look at it, it must be his Military Arts! That he became a platoon member even in his first year, and had tremendous strength. During the platoon matches he played a huge role. The fact that he was not good at studying let other guys rejoice, but his prowess during home economics class made him famous as a familial expert.

Well, it would be better not to think of that, because from any angle he was incomparable.

(Hurry up and die, devil!)

Why did such a perfect guy exist in this world? Ed could only beat him in studying, but there were many students who had better grades than him. And male students with excellent grades who stood out more than Ed were similarly numerous.

Such as the one who represented the greatest mind of the male students - the student council president, Karian Loss. Intellect, power, wealth, appearance, he had all four. God, please quickly let these kinds of people disappear!

After cursing all males in the world who were more excellent than he was, he finally managed to face Layfon ordinarily.

If this was the way of the world, then he wanted to cry. Ed already lost track of what he wanted to say.

"Oh ho? How rare! Are you fighting?"

After politely saying those words, he should quickly return.

"No, it's really not that sort of situation..."

Vague, so it couldn't be told whether they were truly fighting. Ed conceived a kind of "You deserved it!" mentality.

"Anyway, you aren't eating?"

For some reason, Layfon's sight stayed on Ed's bento.

"Could it be that you want this?"

"Ah, this month there's a bit of a financial crisis, and I've always been thinking of saving."

The majority of Military Artists had a large appetite, and even female Military Artists could relaxedly finish this type of bento. If one thought about this fact it was a bit annoying, why don't they occasionally gain a bit of fat too!

No, it was because they were Military Artists that they were this robust - as expected of a Military Artist!

Ed imagined a Layfon covered in fat, it was a very interesting appearance.

Wait, wasn't he usually always eating Meishen's hand-made cuisine? Today, since he wasn't eating, didn't that mean they were fighting?

(Maybe, this is a good opportunity!)

Opportunity... once he thought of this the atmosphere grew much darker. Even if he succeeded in the end, Ed thought it wouldn't be a good thing.

But, if he didn't act now, things would become worse.

"You want to buy it?"

"How much?"

Baited! He really was hungry!

"Five hundred yen."

"So expensive, that's the cafeteria's selling price! It doesn't have to be that expensive, right? One hundred!"

Unexpectedly tough - Military artists were all misers!

"Three hundred!"

"One fifty!"

"You know the original price of this bento, two hundred fifty!"

"Two hundred!"

Deal!

After completing the transaction, Ed started a new topic.

"Do you think you could listen to my request..."

Suddenly, Layfon's hands stopped.

"What is it?"

Ed decided to explain the situation to him.



The scene shifted to the roof. From this place, one could clearly see the surrounding school building.

"Do you see that girl over there?"

"Hair like this?"

Layfon used his hand holding his fork to draw curls on his head.

"Right, right."

Truthfully, Ed who was nodding couldn't really see clearly from here. Other than the fact that they looked like a group of female students from the same class talking, he didn't know anything.

Even so, he could imagine that curly hair, gently moving body, and eyes and even more tender lips that loved to laugh.

"She's called Amy Cook."

"Oh."

Layfon's reaction was only this.

"Don't recognize her?"

"Nope."

Eating the bento while shaking his head, even after reconfirming the girl he hadn't the slightest interest. Should he be relieved at Layfon's reaction, or should he be restless? Ed's feelings were very mysterious.

"She's a member of the seventeenth platoon's fan club!"

".....Eh?"

Layfon's busily dining hands instantly stopped.

"What is that?"

"What is that!? You don't know? Fan club?"

"I don't know, though I've heard of it once, what is it?"

"What is it... a fan club is just a fan club!"

It seemed that he could only teach from the beginning, as Ed let out a sigh.

"Pretty much every platoon has its own fan club! Even if it's just a city platoon match, to them it's the most important matter! They give everything to be at the platoon match cheering for the platoon!"

"Ah."

"Ah'... Is that it!?"

"Even if you say that, I still don't really understand the meaning of 'fan club'. On the other hand, what are those girls doing?"

Feeling that this language was difficult to understand, Layfon changed the topic.

"What do you think?"

".....?"

Layfon shook his head, making a serious expression.

Seeing this made Ed very unhappy. Are you doing this on purpose? Are you purposely making a man show his innocence? This guy!

"Popular guy."

"You said that before too, why am I a popular guy?"

"Your expression is the expression of a popular guy!"

Even if people called him a popular guy, he didn't show the slightest sign of being shy or indecisive. Wearing an expression of innocence as if holding doubt towards this was also just a standard that the popular guy department used!

"You super popular enemy! You monstrously constructed person! Anyhow, if you want other men to reconsider a bit, first gain some weight!"

"Seems like you said something absurd."

Layfon let himself look at the bento with a discontent face. For now, shouldn't satisfying his appetite be the most important?

".....First clearly figure out what kind of work she's doing!"

If changing Layfon's awareness was made the first priority, the matter would not progress at all. Not to mention just now he himself had indeed

been a little anxious. Well, if he were to explain it himself, he was a bit shy, but with things as they were, he could only patiently say it.

This kind of tiny shop welcomed Amy.

"Although it is for us to get to know each other, we two haven't really had any particular contact. Of course, she hasn't come here to get close to me.

Originally they were working at the same place, but there had been almost no exchanges between them. Though this was not anything new. He had been like this in his previous school, and after coming to Zuellni there had been no change. Ed's class was more than half comprised by girls, but other than during work he had not talked with anyone.

Ah, he already understood. He had almost no skill at talking to the opposite sex. But even if this were the case, it couldn't be said that he didn't have people that he liked.

"Me, I like her."

He had never spoken these words to any other person. Not only did this refer to confessing, but even in the company of his fellow male students he had never said a word in this direction.

Ed was too embarrassed to look at Layfon, fixedly staring at his feet.

Layfon didn't respond, and the fork in his hands also stopped.

With no other option, Ed raised his head.

Subsequently, the red-faced red-eared Layfon greeted his eyes.

"You, why is your face red!?"

"H, How would I know!! Anyway, why would you tell me about this?"

"So annoying! Isn't it because if I didn't tell you that, there wouldn't be any progress?"

"Huh!?"

"Because what I want to ask of you is related to this!"

"Why!?"

Ed's shame was wiped away without a trace by Layfon's loud yelling, and he raised his voice as well.

"All you do is ask why! It's because there are no other options!"

He had only recently learned that Amy was a member of the seventeenth platoon's fan club. Because Amy would only go work after the platoon matches were finished. At work, she didn't say anything in particular about it. Usually she would just chat about ordinary topics.

He had only recently learned about this situation from her mouth.

The Military Arts competition, the war between cities. One week after the war with the Academy City Myath had finished. It was right as the city returned from its festive atmosphere after the war to its normal state.

"Ah~~, I want to see it too! Layfon's heroic battle."

That was during break time, as Ed was arranging merchandise on the shelves, and Amy was next to him helping. The rest of the workers weren't there, and the boss was in the business office immersing himself in something.

A world of only two people, not a bad opportunity. Only because of this, he had said what he did.

It was good that Amy's classroom was in the nearby school building. Most students were only able to have exchanges with students from neighboring schools. Students who worked like this were very numerous, those who for their own livelihood had to go work after teaching had finished. In this regard, students prioritized activities with their classmates and working over chatting, and if they had free time they would participate in club activities or other social activities.

The Military Artist Layfon was very busy, and also worked the legendary hardest job of cleaning the Mechanical Department. His daily routine had no intersection with Amy's. And as he had intelligence that Amy was in the fan club, this time he could only make a bet.

So... he said this.

"Actually, I'm a classmate of Layfon! And our relationship isn't bad!"

He did not consider the problem that this exposed until after his boasting.

In order to make himself look reliable, all the problems that he should have considered beforehand were postponed till later.

He thought that he had done something exceedingly foolish.

"Why!?"

"Ah, come on, is asking why all you can do..... Didn't I say that there was no other choice! I was forced by the situation!"

Ed threw out his reply to the lost Layfon. He still had not mentioned his claim that he and Layfon were good friends. Anyway, how would Layfon react? Ed felt a bit of a heartache.

".....Okay, what happened after that?"

Layfon's face was a bit stiff. Maybe he already had some bad premonition of the following words, he was that shocked.

If it was like this, even if there wasn't such an uncomfortable atmosphere, he still shouldn't go there.

"Ah, well, I promised to get us three together to hang out."

"Ah, huh....."

"That's what I said, but the other party definitely wants to date you."

"Well....."

As he thought about how Amy had been so happy her eyes became moist, Ed ground his teeth. Amy had even acted like that, so what should be made of the embarrassed look in front of him?

Everything had been for the sake of those two eyes.

Because the one who had let her reveal those eyes was himself.

Ed could not betray that pair of eyes, even if it was a lie he had to turn it into reality.

"Listen up, Layfon."

Ed grabbed Layfon's shoulders. Layfon, however, kept his posture of carrying his bento.



They seemed so slim, but once you touched them you could feel the hard muscles, they really were a pair of hard and heavy shoulders.

This was a Military Artist..... Ed thought this, as this was perhaps the first time he actually touched the body of a Military Artist.

"Personally, I like Amy."

"Ah, er, yeah."

Layfon dumbly nodded his head. The light coming from Ed's eyes actually made the out of battle seventeenth platoon's ace swallow.

"So I definitely, definitely want to make this date a success. It must become the best date! For that I need your cooperation, so please!"

Ed desperately conveyed these words. Continuing to grab Layfon's shoulders, he lowered his head.

"Eh, uh, ah, I get it."

Layfon agreed, so this problem had been solved.

Therefore, the next problem began.

"Ah, er, Layfon!"

"Huh?"

"What do you think would make the best date?"

"Hah?"

"I've never done that kind of thing, but Layfon definitely has, right? What makes a good date?"

"I, I don't know!"

From the roof came Layfon's cry.



Question: In times when one is challenged by what they do not understand, what should be done?

Answer: Seek instruction from those who do understand.

For this purpose, two people skipped class to come here. Right now was not the time to attend class, moreover, after class ended Layfon had platoon training - something which absolutely could not be skipped, or else things unknown might happen.

It wasn't that skipping class was their original target. But they could not go to where they wanted in the time remaining in the lunch break. So as a result, the two ended up skipping class.

"Yo-"

The person they were looking for was leisurely lying on the level grass.

"It's rare to see you Layfon-san, did you always have the class-skipping attribute?"

"I came looking for you, Sharnid-sempai."

Because of the blessings brought by summer, even lying on the grass didn't make one feel cold. The place under the shade of the trees was very cool and comfortable. However, for what reason was he staying alone in this park by the road next to the artificial forests?

Before Layfon had spoken, he had not known what this person called Sharnid was here for.

"Are you here to practice Kei?"

"Ah? I wouldn't do that kind of thing, I'm just here to sleep! My, what kind of rumors have you heard..... Though it's because my talent is difficult to suppress.

The male who was called sempai put his hand under his chin, laughing slightly - even this kind of simple action made Ed annoyed. The seventeenth platoon's sniper Sharnid Elipton, a man who was even more outstanding than Layfon. The gap between the two was visible at a glance.

"Ah, for what are you looking for me?"

"I kind of have something to discuss with you."

"Ah~~?"

Sharnid looked at Layfon, then looked at Ed behind Layfon. Afterwards, he immediately realized that the one who wanted to find him to discuss was not Layfon but rather Ed, and revealed a knowing expression.

"What kind of thing?"

Since he was being stared at, he couldn't keep relying on Layfon to explain.

Ed honestly explained the situation. Although he had earlier spoken with Layfon with great momentum, his voice was like a mosquito's buzz.

This was his original self, though it was uncomfortable to admit it. Some people could fudge their words through ordinary methods, but if it were the words of a seasoned individual it would be difficult. In the first place, Amy didn't have any reason to talk to him, as Ed wasn't even in her field of vision, moreover Ed didn't dare to speak with her.

"Okay, I understand."

After introducing the situation. Sharnid deeply nodded his head - his head practically touched his knee. When had he sat up with his legs crossed?

The three men naturally formed a circle.

"The main point of that date isn't Layfon but rather you, who wants to shine brightly, correct?"

"Eh, that's..... right, but, no, I haven't thought about that yet!"

"Huh? If you don't start thinking about success or failure, you'll definitely have no chance to speak of!"

"Eh, ahhhh!?"

"Then, for now just follow this. Ah, when does it start?"

"Eh, the time starts now..... According to Layfon, his work rotation starts today....."

"Ehhh, so you're telling us to just listen to everything you say?"

In short, the words that they were not able to express well were all correctly received by Sharnid.



"So, what place would be good in three days? We don't have to wait too long, exactly three days later is exam day, and we'll be free in the afternoon. Layfon, don't sweat too much during your exams! The smell of sweat can't be covered up, and after exams finish you won't have time to take a shower.

"Uh....."

"Hmm, as for clothing it would be appropriate to pick something loose, nothing too tight."

"I don't have that kind of clothing!"

"Ah, that's right! What you're wearing should be fine. So Ed, what about you? Remember that you're the main focus!"

He unconsciously sat straight up.

"What are your thoughts about your own apparel?"

".....I, I don't have any."

In the first place he didn't think there were any clothes that were proper for his body type. Handsome clothes were all made for slim men.

"So you're saying, there aren't any clothes that you consider handsome? Ah, that's also hopeless, hopeless."

"Haah....."

"How about this, we'll go pick clothing now."

"Eh?"

"Isn't that obvious? You want to be remembered in that girl's heart, right? So then you should hurry up and get pumped up, or else you'll end up in a disadvantageous position. Quickly begin taking steps, okay."

"Y, Yes sir!"

Sharnid's personal guidance gave Ed great hope.



Three days later, Layfon who arrived early to the meeting place was surprised.

"What..... What happened?"

"Eh~ Can't you tell at a glance?"

Ed's face..... but no wonder, the past three days had been incredibly busy. Sharnid had not only recommended clothes, but also taught him about dating and other related topics.

As Sharnid proposed to Ed, he had begun busily checking out nearby shops and making reservations. After rushing for some time, there were indeed some results. But it was still too early to meet, and no matter how you saw it this was only the first step. Did the shops really have no problems? The Ed who was not sure of his decisions had gone over each shop once again, and ended up getting no sleep. Ed had gone over the situations of every shop in his brain, including their contests, different dishes, and decorations. By the time he had finished, it was already morning.

So right now, Ed had a serious lack of sleep.

"Aren't you in trouble?"

"For this kind of situation, I prepared this!"

Ed took out an energy drink, drinking it in one gulp. On the bottle's tag were written the words "Military Artists' Energy Drink".

After digesting a mouth full of herbs, a concentrated aftertaste remained. This would definitely have an effect.

However, Layfon did not voice his feelings.

".....I've never seen anyone who drinks that kind of thing."

"Really!?"

"People who are able to enter platoons are able to fight for two or three days without rest."

"No, it has an effect! I'm full of energy!"

Ed said, ignoring Layfon's words.

There wasn't much time left before he was at a distance to reach Amy.

Ed looked over his clothes again from the beginning. To cover his somewhat fat body he had selected larger clothes (one size bigger), and denim pants (standard overalls). He had also cut his hair short.

Honestly, his current state was incomparable to the him before.

"You feel like they don't fit right now, but that's because you haven't gotten used to wearing them!"

Sharnid had said this.

"Listen up, the first priority should be a clean appearance. Appearance is the most important thing in life. In order to get you some progress, I've spent a lot of effort!"

He always thought he didn't really fit those words.

However, he only needed to think of those words, and his confidence would somehow emerge. How amazing!

Looking at Layfon again, his clothes were very tidy, but were also very old-fashioned.

(I might be able to do this!)

He had this kind of feeling in his heart. Even though this way of thinking did not have any basis, to the point where he couldn't really make sense of it. But he felt that he had a chance, that he could do something.

Just then, Amy arrived.

"Sorry for the wait!"

Amy trotted up, catching her breath while raising her head to look at Layfon.

"I'm Amy Cook."

"Ah..... Layfon Alsief."

"I know!"

A smile emerging on Amy's face, she radiated a kind of dazzling brilliance.

But this kind of scene only made Ed feel bad, as if someone had punched him in the nose.

The date began.

From the moment the date began..... No, even before the date had begun Ed had eagerly expected to see the things he had prepared reach maturity.

"So, what should we do?"

Amy held Layfon's arm, drawing close with a relaxed attitude.

"Uh....."

Layfon looked at Ed with a troubled expression.

Ed had prepared his words long before. For this stage, he had racked his brains.

"In that case! I know a pretty good place, we can go there!"

Clapping her hands as she proposed this, Amy looked very happy, enough that no one could deny it.

(Uh oh.....)

Ed shook his head.

"T, today I already have a reservation somewhere, so we should go there."

"Awww-!?"

"Uh, sorry!"

Turning to the side with a dissatisfied expression, Ed immediately let out his anger.

"Since Ed bothered to prepare, I'll happily go."

Worthy Layfon, the tide has suddenly turned back around.

"Is that so? Then I'll go too!"

Amy's attitude abruptly changed. "Then let's go!" she said as she pulled Layfon's hand.

(This..... it's far from good)

He was aware that it wasn't reassuring. Somehow, it didn't seem like he was the protagonist of this scene.

The store that Ed had a reservation for was a moderately expensive restaurant. During the day, the lights were somewhat dim, and music very appropriate for the atmosphere was broadcast from inside the restaurant.

Truthfully, with regard to Ed's financial situation, this was not an easy expenditure.

Layfon wouldn't have brought much money, and originally it had been Ed who wanted to bring them to this sort of luxurious place. No need to even mention Amy, there was no way she would be allowed to pay.

So, Ed bore the full burden of the meals.

(Ugh.....)

In his heart, Ed wept blood and tears. The clothes he had especially picked for today had also been expensive, and thanks to that he had entirely emptied his savings.

The result was something that didn't resemble his expectations at all, what kind of joke was that?

However, the food was exceedingly delicious. Whether it was quality or quantity, there was absolutely nowhere that could rival this place. This was something he had learned from his classmates, as well as something he had asked of someone working for a cuisine magazine's editorial section.

"To think that Ed-san knew of a place like this!"

"Ah, yeah."

"So awesome!"

Amy looked at Ed with an admiring gaze while saying those words.

There was a kind of feeling of salvation. Even if 99% of Amy's words were spoken with Layfon, he still thought this didn't feel so bad.

.....Although there was still no way to alleviate the pain of his wallet.

After eating, the party of three who had been completely fed left the restaurant feeling very content.

"I'm going to the bathroom."

Right after exiting, Layfon said this. Hence Ed and Amy began to wait at the entrance.

The alone time that he had been looking forward to had finally arrived!

(Quickly, quickly say something)

Amy played with her hair while looking into the distance. In order to not let her feel bored, Ed's mood turned urgent.

"Ah, um..... It's hot today, isn't it!"

Today, the sky was totally clear, without even a shadow of a cloud. The sun shone down with impunity. Since it was close to summer, the heat radiated by the sun made the temperature soar.

"Yeah."

Amy glanced at the sky, replying with a voice that sounded dull no matter what angle you listened from.

Ed watched her face from the side. To avoid heatstroke, the neckline of Amy's short-sleeved shirt was rather deep. On the tender skin peeking out, sporadic drops of sweat were sparkling under the shining sunlight.

Ed silently swallowed.

(Could it be..... this is my chance?)

Ed had a certain resolution in his heart, a resolution which he had not told Layfon or Sharnid.

-Today, I will confess!

This was truly what he had resolved.

However, the existence of Layfon was a great hindrance. Ed had been hoping from the beginning that a time for them two to be alone would come.

After waiting and waiting, the opportunity had finally come.

(Should I say it now? But, there are still plans for later that haven't happened yet.....)

If he succeeded, he could say goodbye to Layfon - Ah, it would let the two of them truly begin the date!

But if he failed, the atmosphere would become abnormally terrible.

Ed thought that and acted as such. Deep in his heart there was a voice calling himself a wimp, but it was okay, he still wanted to experience this "time for two".

"Sorry for the wait."

Accompanying the sound of the door chime, Layfon walked out from the inside.

"Ah....."

Amy's calm expression returned to a smile, then suddenly became motionless.

Ed turned around, and also became motionless.

Layfon's expression was also motionless.

Because behind Layfon, could be seen the three girls who were always sticking to him.

Meishen Trinden cowering as always, Naruki Gelni revealing judging eyes, and Mifi Rotten's shining eyes full of expectation.

They had appeared here.

"How can this be!?"

Rapidly pulling over Layfon, he quietly asked.

"Um, I'm not too clear on the reasons either..... When I came out of the restroom I ran into them."

"Why don't you be a little more careful, you Military Artist!"

"Even if you say that with a murderous look, for me to knowingly avoid them, isn't that a bit too inconsiderate!"

"Hey, are you two finished talking?"

Mifi's face appeared between the two.

"Uwah!"

"If you're finished talking, hurry up and begin the next activity! You couldn't be planning on getting rid of us, hmm?"

"Eh? You want to come with us?"

Anyway, these three were also classmates. Because they had not really thoroughly talked before, Ed's speaking started becoming tense.

"N, no problem, we weren't thinking of losing you."

As Mifi looked at Ed, she let out a peculiar snicker. She understood; the situation that Meishen and Naruki didn't understand Mifi already fully comprehended.

(If you know, why do you still want to come with us!)

But Ed didn't have the courage to speak the words in his heart. So, it became a six-person activity.

Amy's mood worsened significantly.

(W-w-w-what should I do)

The atmosphere that had fallen apart made Ed feel very uncomfortable inside.

"Ah, how cool!"

"So pretty-"

"This kind of..... feeling of being surrounded, it's hard to describe....."

"I agree with Naruki's mysterious feeling!"

Completely unaware of Ed's mood, Meishen and Mifi began praising the exhibition's surrounding environment without restraint. Behind them, Layfon was discussing Military Arts topics with Naruki. And next to them was.....

"....."

The completely silent Amy, without a trace of a smile on her face.

(Uh oh.....)

Observing Amy by her side, Ed could only silently endure his discomfort.

Ed and the others were currently at the bottom of an aquaculture lake, in the middle of a wide walkway wrapped by pressure glass. This aquaculture lake was big enough to supply the entire city's aquatic resources, simultaneously containing many kinds of fish and other aquatic flora and fauna. This area that was open to the public was known as the Lake Cloister, and was very famous as a dating spot.

Not far from them, an Aquaculture Division student who had run up began scattering bait. Groups of fish that had come here began gathering.

There were also people wearing diving suits applying some kind of instrument to the backs of some small mammals, were they checking their health conditions?

This aquatic world was like a scene from a dream. To call it a positive area, a curative space full of alpha waves, wouldn't be too much.

But.....

"....."

(Why!?)

There was a feeling of wanting to cry.

"So powerful, how long! How large! What kind of thing is that!?"

"Ummm..... it's a Piruru, it says here!"

That was Mifi, who was surprised by an extremely long fish swimming in a path nearby, and the reply was from Meishen, who was flipping through a small book to find an explanation.

"However, as for altering Kei....."

"If you can alter your Kei well, anything is possible. Naruki, you've practiced with our platoon before, right? It has to do with easily altering the appearance and character of your Kei."

On this side were Layfon and Naruki, only chatting about Military Arts.

The atmosphere had already been broken by these small groups. The soft atmosphere from their meal at the restaurant had long since disappeared without a trace.

"....."

The air emanating from Amy constantly irritated the speechless Ed, and would definitely be a warning to any male.

Could I be wrong? Um, I'm probably not wrong. No, my thoughts are definitely correct.

"Oy!" Ed pulled Layfon over to the side, "What are you doing, just say a few words and end this."

"Eh?"

"What are you 'Eh'-ing for!"

Ed softly yelled, believing that he still had some use.

"But, Mifi said I should chat with my acquaintances a bit....."

"What are you saying? Mifi wants to talk with you, huh! If you don't handle this right, what kind of a date would this be!"

"Ahhh....."

"Don't 'Ahhh' me!"

Ed really felt like he was going to cry.

"I sincerely beg of you!"

"Well, um..."

"However, is doing this really okay nya~?"

Mifi's face popped up between the two of them again.

"Uwah!"

Ed flinched, and on Mifi's face arose another suspicious smile.

"W, what are you doing!"

"If that girl and Layfon happily chat, is that really a good thing?"

"It, it's definitely a good thing, right?"

"But, that kind of thing would definitely be far from good, you know!"

"In what way?"

Seeing Mifi's attitude, Ed began feeling uncomfortable.

"With regards to a disturbed mentality, in the end it's still possible that a disturbed mentality ends up relatively lucky."

"Speak a bit clearly!"

"But you who is so perturbed, it could be that you have no chance!"

He had no idea what she was saying. But Ed was disturbed, and the reason for that he was quite clear on.

Mifi was inciting a sense of crisis in Ed's heart. After that, she very clearly realized that Ed had taken the bait.

"Mi-chan."

"Yes~~, sorry!"

The Layfon-trained Mifi withdrew and left, returning to her friends.

Holding a last stand frame of mind, Ed patted Layfon's back. This action was very slow, because if he did it too quickly perhaps Layfon might have gotten annoyed.

"Mifi always has people think strangely."

Layfon slowly smiled. Even if the smile was slow, it was very warm.

"You want to make that girl happy, right?"

"Ah, ahah. Um, yes!"

He thought of it. If it weren't for her, Ed wouldn't have let this sort of expression show. Slapping his cheeks, spirit slowly returned again to his face.

"Good luck!"

Layfon's encouragement reached him.

(This guy, he's a good person)

The impression of Layfon in Ed's heart was changed for the first time.



Later, Mifi's three-person group pursued a separate activity, departing at a fork in the road. It seemed that Mifi had learned of today's event from some source, and proposed that they go look at what kind of a person Amy was.

At the parting time, Mifi quietly apologized to Ed.

"Sorry!"

But her demeanor didn't contain a single bit of reflection.

Ed could only reply with a sigh, deciding that replying with words would be too troublesome.

Regardless, today definitely had to come up with results.

The realization that he had almost lost had been re-ignited by Mifi. Looking at it that way, perhaps he owed that girl some thanks.

But in this sort of atmosphere, it wasn't any time to say those kinds of words.

Amy who had flipped moods was currently speaking to Layfon with great momentum.

Ed who was behind the two saw all of this. She looked completely cheerful, completely happy.

Even though this should be good, Ed began to feel dazed.

Because deep in his heart he began to ache.

Regarding the reason for this pain, he had already clearly perceived it - it was jealousy.

However, his jealousy towards Layfon had already disappeared.

This was jealousy towards his past self.

This jealousy was towards himself who had announced that his relationship with Layfon was quite good, the himself that had used this to try to attract Amy's attention. To say this feeling was jealousy was indeed rather strange, perhaps it was simply some sort of pure anger. Of course,

the one next to the happily smiling Amy was not himself, which was another situation that made him jealous.

Jealousy, annoyance.....

Indeed, that remark had attracted Amy's attention. Originally he had been unable to start a conversation with her. Outside of school and work, this was even less of a possibility.

But the current situation was even after Layfon had agreed to help Ed. If Layfon had refused to help, things would definitely have developed into the absolute worst scenario.

Ed had thought of using Layfon, and afterwards manufacture for himself time to be alone with Amy.

(Okay)

Clenching his fist, this time he had truly made up his mind.

Go confess!

Ah, it's decided! It's been decided decided decided!

(Definitely must be done)

Ed still expected that he would be able to straighten his back and accomplish something, and this feeling was very strong.

Now they had just left the Lake Cloister, the timing was just right. It was too early for dinner, but the sun had already began to tilt to the west.

It was almost time to disperse.

In the tram station of the aquaculture lake, Ed had already confirmed the arrival times of the trams. Right before the time Ed arrived, the tram had left.

This way, there would be more time to wait for the next tram.

Because of the time spent strolling through the Lake Cloister, Amy was already very tired. Ed was the same. But Layfon appeared still undisturbed.

Worthy of a Military Artist, Ed thought as he watched Amy sit down on one of the station's long benches.

"I'm a bit thirsty."

Amy looked at Ed while saying this.

If she had said "Today was so fun!" or that sort of lively tune, with a good expression, Ed would probably have responded with "Oh" or "Is that so", that kind of tone.

But that sentence "I'm a bit thirsty", and upon saying it, her eyes immediately turned towards Ed. Even if a smile was on her face, the more important eyes were not smiling.

"Ah, I'll go."

"No, I should go instead!"

Stopping Layfon, Ed left the station to look for a vending machine.

Bad bad bad bad..... Ed quickly started running. Since the time they left the Lake Cloister, he hadn't seen a vending machine. What kind of place would have one..... He might spend additional time searching. In order to reach his own most important target, Ed ran while carefully searching for vending machines.

Ed painfully understood inside his heart why Amy would purposefully send him away, so he needed to hurry. Luckily, he very quickly saw a vending machine, located in a dead end not far from the station. Ed quickly bought three cans of juice. As he had not asked them for their preferences, he selected 100% fruit juice.

Ed bolted back.

But, he still had not been fast enough.

There were no figures inside the windswept station other than Layfon and Amy. Amy who should have been sitting on the bench was standing in front of Layfon. Carrying out her confession with a serious, but also shy, expression.

Ed's footsteps stopped, unable to decide whether he could continue getting closer.

He finally realized the meaning of Mifi's words. Even if it was a guess, Sharnid has also forecasted this kind of situation. Even he himself had.....

All this Ed had forgotten anyway, but he couldn't forget this situation that made him cringe.

If Ed hadn't done this, Amy could have stayed as one of Layfon's fans. She would have been the same as her surrounding girls, with a fan's likes and troubles. Perhaps some day she would also have shifted her interest to some other area.

But, she could be together with Layfon. The originally far away target had become so close.....

In this area, Ed and Amy's situations were similar. If not for this opportunity, perhaps the thought of confessing would not have arisen. If Amy had quit that hourly work, Ed would have no choice but to accept that she had stopped working, sending away his thoughts of some day going on a date with her.

However, things had not progressed that way.

Therefore, his good mood had been destroyed by himself - this was true no matter how you looked at it.

"How disappointing!"

He heard Amy's voice.

"You and him aren't friends at all!"

Accompanying the blowing wind, that voice reached Ed. The secret was revealed. Amy faced Layfon with a flattering look.

"Look at it this way, how can he be good friends with Layfon! Because, Layfon-san is a Military Artist, as well as a platoon member, and is a very strong person. The people surrounding you are also very strong, so there's no reason for you to purposely get friendly with average people."

Amy's words were completely correct. Layfon's strength had spread from the event that happened during the opening ceremony. Ed and the other classmates all thought this way, so other than simple greetings they didn't interact with him at all.

Because Layfon was so amazing!

How could such an amazing person be a friend of Ed!

When he claimed to be friends with Layfon, what exactly had Ed been thinking? "I'm friends with such a strong person!" Had that kind of elated

speech ever been said? It had sounded like deception from the start, only said to attract Amy's attention.

Layfon was silent, silent throughout. What was he thinking? From where Ed was, he could only see Layfon's back.

"Also, why him? That kind of exaggerated appearance doesn't fit him at all! Does he just want to appear similar to Layfon-san?"

His previous thoughts that Sharnid had been playing around taking him to buy clothes disappeared completely.

But, he didn't let himself interrupt Amy, nor did he even think of it. He couldn't entrust himself to his anger, and stand in front of Amy. Other than standing here, he couldn't do anything.

Enough, I should just escape! - Ed thought this - Escape, it doesn't matter if I'm called a wimp, I should just hurry up and escape!

However, Layfon, who had been silent until now, opened his mouth. As soon as his voice reached Ed's ears, Ed stopped.

"So, why do you want to tell me this?"

"Eh?"

"Did you think I would agree with what you said? That I would say 'Yeah, that's right'?"

Layfon's voice did not have any sullenness, none at all. Only plain words.

"Layfon-san?"

"Indeed, what he said before about us being friends, might not have been real. We were only classmates. Truthfully, I wouldn't have come here today. I was truly stunned speechless when we met Meishen and the others. They have been good friends with me since my admission. So, I felt very happy."

Hearing Layfon say this, Ed's mood was still sorrowful.

"However, if it were really bothersome, I would have refused. But I didn't refuse. I'm not an expert in dating, Even though I heard Sharnid-sempai's recommendations, I couldn't put them to use. However, I still accepted Ed's request. Do you know why?"

Amy couldn't respond, and was a little frightened. Because it seemed like her words had touched upon a deep anger.

Ed also felt this.

"Ed desperately did this for you. Only because I knew this, did I accept his request. So, from that time on, Ed and I already became friends. My friend has been regarded as a fool by others, who would feel happy after this!"

Amy seemed to say something, but Layfon had no intention of listening. He quickly turned his back to the station and left.

Amy's eyes chased Layfon's figure from behind. In order to keep himself from entering her vision, Ed quickly hid himself.

Layfon walked by Ed.

"Sorry."

He said this, but didn't stop his steps.

Without taking note of whether Amy noticed that he was hiding here, or taking note of whether she was still looking in this direction - Ed chased after Layfon.

"Thank you!"

Facing that back, Ed let out words from his heart.



Not to say that one's mood can be restored instantly.

(Ahhh, I've worked hard)

This kind of feeling finally returned. From the second day, Amy stopped coming to the store to work. Even whether she was still in the seventeenth platoon's fan club was unclear.

He was very grateful that he could not see Amy's expression. He felt that the fact that they were in different school buildings was quite a good thing.

But he had only really felt this was a good thing since after that day when he heard Layfon's words. It was his first time being called a friend in front

of others, as in the first place no one who would say those kinds of things about him existed.

(As expected, I've worked hard)

Ed's mood had swayed back and forth for two days, and now it was the lunch break of a new day.

As a result he welcomed this fateful meeting.

Ed had expected the usual high-grade bento.

"Welcome!"

From deep in the kitchen walked a girl, whose beautiful face startled Ed. This was a girl who had a different kind of style. The apron that replaced the uniform naturally blended with her body, letting one feel a sort of family atmosphere, and her behavior was also very mature. Just from looking at her, Ed's heart beat incessantly.

Come to think of it, recently the arrival of a cute new worker in the bento store had caused a big commotion.

Certainly, that was this girl.

"Have you decided what meal you want?"

To her crisp inquiry, Ed couldn't utter a reply.

This, this is..... love!

Ed felt this intuitively.

This is my love, this is my fate!

The Ed who had just become so confident was downright betrayed in the next moment.

As if Ed were being chased, the bento store's doors opened again. As the girl looked at the entrance, her expression immediately became even more gorgeous.

But the words she spoke, they were not words that a store worker would receive someone with.



"Layfon, did you properly bring money today?"

"I brought it. Because yesterday was payday!"

"Nnn, if you don't deposit some savings you won't make it!"

"I made deposits, it's just that since I used it till now, the money I was carrying ran out!"

"Really?"

"I promise, Leerin - aren't we childhood friends!"

"Of course, but Layfon and I are different, I have sufficient ability to adapt!"

The conversation between the two was very cordial, carried out very naturally. And it seemed like her expression was very happy.....

"Ah, Ed!"

Turning around, Layfon finally noticed Ed.

"You... Popular man-----!!"

Containing all of his loathing, Ed yelled that out.

Morning of You and Me

Morning.

I encountered Layfon in front of "Sauce Soba Bread". This small shop cart in front of the first-year school building was managed by a sempai who looked like a middle-aged man, but was someone who had escaped from the Discipline Committee's hunts many times. During school hours, selling things at this kind of place was against school rules. However, the customers were considered innocent. Ah!

"Good morning!"

"Ah."

This early in the morning, he was able to show such a refreshing attitude, and I was only able to quietly give a strained reply.

"You have no vigor!"

"After yesterday, there's no way I could have no energy."

"What happened yesterday?"

I really wanted to throttle this person who was tilting his head as if it were natural, but the probability that I would be killed was 10000%. In front of this guy, probabilities and those kinds of things already had no meaning. Even if buildings in front of him came crashing down, he would keep on living. If Zuellni suddenly exploded, maybe he might die.Though by that time I would be 10000% dead.

".....Nothing happened."

I ordered five soba breads. As the soba quivered on the iron cooking plate, some sort of sauce was added that gave off a smell that made it hard to resist. The middle-aged sempai sandwiched the finished soba inside bread.

The enthusiasm of this middle-aged sempai who did not sell anything other than sauce soba bread had already passed through the taste of the bread to reach me. Depending on the blessings of the Discipline Committee members, this small shop cart wasn't something that could be seen every day, and even if it was seen it might have been sold out long ago. How fortunate that I could come across it today in this kind of place! Perhaps this kind of fortune could let me forget about yesterday's matter.

Layfon who was next to me also ordered bread. Five, the same quantity.

"So, what happened to the person from yesterday?"

To alleviate the atmosphere, I asked Layfon this while he waited for the soba sauce bread to be made.

Layfon had originally thought that perhaps he would forget that matter in a twinkling of an eye, like a dream. As expected, he still held an interest in that person. No, it was only right to say it was something that couldn't be forgotten. Ahh, false, a man's heart is so false.

"A childhood friend!"

"You lie!"

I shouted out. No, perhaps it was true that they were childhood friends. However, there was definitely more to it than that!

If they were only childhood friends, and moreover because they were boy and girl..... They shouldn't be able to so cordially have a conversation.

I also had a childhood friend. She was also a girl, very cute at that, and you could say she was my first love.

But her, she stopped talking to me early in the second grade.

Ahh, it was a bit painful. My youth had barely begun.

"She's really a childhood friend!"

Seeming to have seen through the doubt in my heart, Layfon repeated himself again.

Our sauce soba bread had finished being made, and while steaming were stuffed into bags and delivered out.

Just then, from the school entrance came over some Discipline Committee members. The middle-aged sempai immediately jumped onto the shop cart, and pressed a certain button. A grinding engine noise sounded, and a thin smoke immediately rose from the tail of the shop cart. The cart's wheels spun, rubbing intensely over the ground.

The wind mixed the smell of the burnt tires with the smell of the sauce.

The shop cart rapidly escaped.

The Discipline Committee members desperately tried to catch up. But they were not Military Artists, and the middle-aged sempai would definitely escape them.

That sempai who had so much enthusiasm towards sauce soba bread was truly awesome.

I also wanted to achieve some of that awesomeness.

Impact of Childhood 01

She really didn't know what to do.

She thought of Mifi, and decided that going back like this would be disappointing. Even if there could be that kind of result, she still thought that doing things like that wasn't a good idea. The reason that this kind of thing could occur – and there was no excuse – was Mifi's unreasonable attitude. Sigh~

That being said, having just thought of it upon arrival, she felt that it was a bit late to be thinking like that.

This was the Sick Room, and in front of her was.....

".....Zzz ~" "

Layfon, resting quietly. His injuries had been treated on the same day he had arrived at the hospital, and he had taken some pills and rested, awaiting further examinations. These tests were especially for Layfon, who since entering the school had been admitted into the hospital several times.

Layfon showed no signs of waking. It was probably her first time seeing his sleeping face like this. It was the first time that she was by his side, watching him.

How did it become like this? She thought over it again.

Yes, it was a thing of yesterday.....



When she heard the news from Naruki, Meishen felt as if she had fallen into a deep abyss. Outside the window, Zuellni was surging forward in victory. This was the night after the conclusion of the battle with Myath. In the spontaneous celebration, lights lit up everywhere and outside the window the night sky was a lot more beautiful than its usual quiet atmosphere.

"Bang-Clang." Noisy sounds from outside came through the glass window, echoing throughout the room. The dormitory which Meishen and her

friends lived in was on the first floor, and it had a large space similar to the lounge room so the sound could have come from there as well.

".....Aie!" It could be because of the noisy lounge room that she misheard. First of all, she didn't even understand why she was so affected by the sounds.

(But, Layfon would be happy, because he might never see it again...)

After learning Layfon's story, Meishen should be happy. Layfon might never return to his place of birth, Grendan, so she never thought that they would meet again.

They will meet again.

That's why it wouldn't be right if Meishen and Layfon weren't able to be and feel happy together.

But Meishen's heart was in turmoil, like waves rippling across a pond, wavering with indecision. Those ripples stabbed at her heart, and it hurt more as she struggled.

(Why?)

She always felt afraid of knowing the cause of this pain. Meishen placed her hands above her head, gripping tightly.

"No... That's..."

In front of her, Naruki lowered her head as if she had said something wrong, an exhausted expression on her face. She had accepted the job to infiltrate the enemy city, accepted the dangerous mission of attacking the enemy city's flag. The battle had finished only today, so it was natural for her to be tired. And upon her return she was questioned thoroughly by Mifi in the name of a report, draining her even more. After she fell onto the sofa she was too tired to move again.

Even though she was in such a state, she was still very direct.

"Leerin came."

"What~?"

But Meishen, receiving such a shocking blow from Naruki, said nothing. The person who had replaced her in shouting out in surprise was her friend

Mifi, who was still writing down information from the interview. The door was wide open, and Mifi burst into the room surprising both of them.

"I heard it all!"

"Stop eavesdropping!" Showing an annoyed expression Naruki continued, "That's why we weren't talking about this in front of you."

"Uwah, that was mean. Hey, this is discrimination, and I'm against discrimination! Everyone should be treated equally!"

"Ok, ok, just be quiet for a second." Naruki was now really tired, and had no time for Mifi's nonsense.

Yet there was no way Mifi was just going to let it rest. What Naruki was talking about was perhaps the most important subject to the three girls present; something which had left them in suspense for a long time. How could she just let it pass?

Mifi was desperate for information to the extent that any ordinary piece of information would rouse her curiosity, and if you saw her expression, akin to that of a starved dog, you would have no choice but to give it to her.

"Hey, what kind of a beauty is she? A supermodel? An unrivalled Miss Universe?"

"Couldn't she be anything other than a beauty?"

"But she's his proper wife, his proper wife! She's that super slow-witted Layfon's proper wife!"

"Don't say 'proper wife'!"

Actually, acknowledging Layfon and Leerin as a couple was a little strange. When Layfon mentioned her, they were but childhood friends. You could say that they were raised in the same orphanage as siblings. If they really were a couple, wouldn't he readily talk about her, and about what she did? Or was it because other things had been mixed into those memories that he was reluctant to speak of his past?

Naruki took this as a signal to start talking. She was already exhausted and still had to speak, and as she thought of this she revealed an annoyed expression from the bottom of her heart.

"That kind of stuff is really touching, right? They clearly don't know so can they still be counted as a couple...?"

When she said that, not only were Naruki and Meishen surprised, but Mifi, who was talking felt an impact as well.

Leerin Marfes, Layfon's childhood friend, is probably the one who understands him best.

And she left Grendan, arriving here.

Why?

"Eh, why'd she come here? It can't be because she wants to meet Layfon? Romantic? It's such a romantic thing to do!"

"Mi-chan, you're too excited."

Hearing Naruki, Mifi covered her mouth and looked towards Meishen.

"It's okay."

Hearing her say that, her two best friends looked her way and started smiling.

Yes, these two were her friends that she had grown up with. For Meishen, they were very important childhood friends. Calling them friends was an understatement, calling them good friends belittled the importance of Naruki and Mifi's presence. Their friendship had already reached the stage where every move of her childhood friends was very important.

(For Layfon, Leerin must also be such an important person.)

But, but, but... if she accepted that idea from the bottom of her heart, Meishen's feelings should also be accepted. Right now, she had already appeared at Zuellni, so Meishen should say and believe what she says from the bottom of her heart, 'That's great!'

But she couldn't.

Well, if there had to be a reason, then it would be because Layfon was male, and Leerin female.

Completely changing the relationship between a man and woman with the term "childhood friends"... Meishen didn't have much life experience, and

she couldn't just readily accept this, and she didn't have much foresight. However, she wasn't stupid.

How would Layfon, who had buried his feelings deep in his heart, react when he saw Leerin? How would he react, when he saw Leerin, who had come from Grendan especially to meet him?

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, and thirty minutes passed as she pondered this question.

"Then let's do some reconnoitering!"

Forcing the ideas of not wanting to treat Leerin as an enemy and not being able to treat her as an enemy out of her mind, Meishen felt a little lonely.

"That's fine, right? We'll act as a special unit to ensure Meishen's success in her romance. Finding information on our enemy is our most important mission right now!"

Facing Mifi who was shouting loudly, Meishen's face turned red.

Finding herself in this situation where only Naruki had seen Leerin, and having absolutely no other information, Mifi proposed the above solution.

Getting over the noisy celebrations of Zuellni's victory in the inter-city battles, they had a break the following day. And when the sun rose, the next day arrived.

"So, where's the target?"

"Location unknown." Naruki replied indifferently to Mifi who had finished her breakfast, gotten ready to go out, and packed her notepad and pen into her bag, totally in the zone.

"How can that be?"

"Normally she would be living in a dorm right? And then she would be picked up by people from the Student council, and afterwards we don't know what would happen. Maybe Layfon might know?"

"...Can we ask Layfon?"

"It should be okay..."

"...But, isn't there another way?"

Meishen had just voiced her own thoughts, and the other two immediately lost their target.

"Is there?" Mifi seriously asked about this untenable, tentative suggestion.

"Then, lets go to the dorms!"

"Yeah, outsiders would usually be there!"

The two geared up girls talked as they approached the door, and Meishen chased after them.

"Speaking of which, there hasn't been a roaming bus recently, so how did she get here?"

"Yeah... I think she came here from the opposing city."

"Eh? How did she come from there?"

"I don't know that either."



"Lucky." Leerin wanted to say that, but she couldn't.

This was a room in the Student Council building. Inside there was a small whiteboard and a simple table and set of chairs. The atmosphere was suitable for a small number of people to hold a conversation.

From the conversation, she found out that the people from the Student Council weren't too sure of the situation either. However it only mattered that she had somehow successfully arrived here.

After the battle, she rushed to the contact point between the cities, and there she saw Layfon.

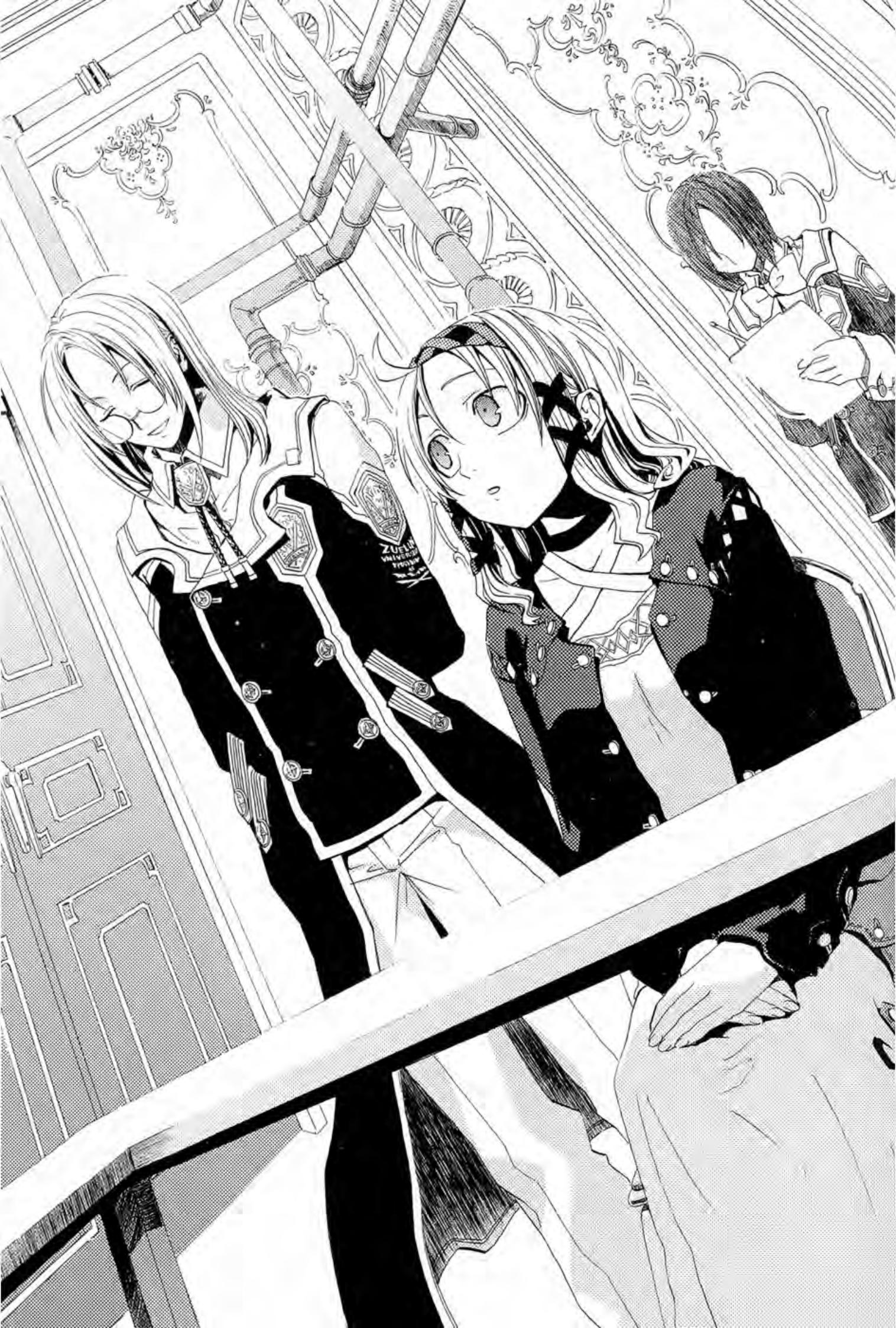
While she was being questioned by the people on the Student Council, she decided to tell them everything. However, she didn't say anything about being brought over here by a Heaven's Blade Successor from Grendan. Being asked to keep a secret by someone else, she definitely couldn't tell anyone.

Although she felt that he was already no longer in Zuellni, and there was no danger in telling them, she still decided not to speak of it. Among the Military artists in Grendan, they stood at the pinnacle, they were the strongest protectors, and their word was definite. That's what a Heaven's Blade Successor was. Being unable to forget about her profound feelings from when Layfon was a Heaven's Blade Successor was something she couldn't do anything about.

Layfon, she wasn't far from him now.

"Well, this is enough, it's not like we're treating you like a dangerous person." The person saying this was a silver-haired youth wearing glasses, who was standing behind her and had listened to her questioning. He was calmer than anyone else, and he revealed a sincere expression.

"I believe that this is the first time that we have met, I am the president of the Student Council, Karian Loss."



"First... First time meeting each other.....?" When she greeted him, Leerin tilted her head to the side. "...Could it be, that you are a person from Grendan?"

"No, you've made a mistake."

"Is that so? Mmm... Where have we met before?"

Normally, one would say that there was nothing to this conversation, however, the atmosphere should be taken into account.

"Then, where? In Zuellni's travels, while passing Grendan, It might be possible that I saw you."

Karian did not express displeasure at Leerin's words but kindly nodded instead.

"Speaking of which, Leerin-chan, why did you come to this city? Did you come on a holiday?"

In the smoothly progressing atmosphere of the conversation, Leerin froze for a moment.

Wishing to conceal nothing, Leerin obediently told him the reason for coming to Zuellni.

"Oh. To bring something for Layfon? It must have been troublesome for you."

"Then, do you know Layfon?"

In his letters, Layfon never mentioned the Student Council president. The Student Council president...Without understanding the political condition of the Academy city but based on the successful development of the city run only by students, this person should be the most powerful person in Zuellni.

Realizing why she had asked such a question, an answer immediately sprung to his mind.

"Yes, I do. For Zuellni, I've done my best to understand him."

From the way Karian spoke, he had already realized that his answer was correct. As he thought this he couldn't help but sigh with relief.

Really, other than Military arts, Layfon seemed to suck really badly.

It was the same with getting exiled from Grendan, his means of subsistence was so poor it was already at a fatal level, and he still didn't show any signs of thinking about or recognizing any of his problems.

(Could it be that even now, he was still not aware of this?)

It seems that it is most likely true.

"Let me help you." Leerin understood the words Karian wanted to say reflected in his eyes.

"That..."

"Oh, that's right, Leerin-chan. Are you going to return as soon as you accomplish what you came here for?"

"Eh?"

"You're obviously going to return to Grendan at some point, but right now the inter-city battle has pretty much been formalized. Seeing as that's the situation, roaming buses will be stranded here for a while as well. How about you stay here for a longer time?"

"Ah..."

She never thought about that. She never thought about the relationship between the inter-city battles and the roaming buses. Sometimes no roaming buses came to Grendan as well, so that was the reason. She never knew that before.

Seeing Leerin with no way out, Karian revealed a faint smile.

Ah, this man was really black-hearted.

As she thought this, Leerin listened to his proposal.

Just like that, the second day came.

"What do I do next?"

After seeing the injured Layfon, Leerin was pondering what to do now.

She had already decided on her destination, and it was the Student Council.

Checking the timetable for the tram, she sat on one of the seats thinking about Karian's offer. She didn't think it was too bad, and although she

wasn't quite sure if what she learned here would be of any use when she went back to Grendan, she saw it as another way of obtaining more knowledge, so it didn't seem too bad. That was what she thought.

"But still..."

But she still thought that Karian had other motives for doing this.

"Hoo..."

The problem was that if roaming buses didn't come, continuing to live in the dorm facilities wasn't a solution. She didn't bring much money with her either, so if she intended to stay here for a long time, she needed to find a job.

"Well, I can think about those problems after the results come out today."

The train arrived and Leerin got up from the seat. As soon as the pneumatic valve sounded, the doors opened.

"Ah..."

The person who made that sound had her mouth gaping open.

"Eh?"

Directed by the sound, Leerin saw that person.

She was a tall girl with fine red hair and tanned skin, giving off an impression of seeming very lanky.

"....." "....."

That girl didn't say anything, she just continued to stare. Leerin was naturally waiting for her reply, so she didn't move either.

"What's wrong, Nakki?, a red-haired girl who seemed to be one of her friends asked her.

"Ah.. Ahaha... sorry about that, Mei, Mi."

Pushing her friends who were about to get off the train tram back into the middle of the carriage, she backed away from the door. Leerin politely got on the train tram. The train started moving, and there were still many empty seats. Leerin found a seat and sat down, mindlessly eyeing the route map above the door of the train tram.

"Excuse me, are you Leerin?"

It was that red haired girl from before.



She felt as if something troublesome had happened.

(Uu... What to do?)

She didn't know where Leerin was, and having no other options, she listened to Mifi's idea, which was to get some information while going out to visit Layfon. But she never thought she would meet Leerin in this place.

Naruki began to speak up, and she started to introduce herself and her friends to Leerin. Afterwards, Mifi and Naruki started a conversation with Leerin. She seemed to be the type of person to easily accept others.

"Hey, hey, what was Lay-ton like in Grendan?"

"Ah... here you guys call him Lay-ton?"

"No, it's just us! It's the nickname we gave him."

Hearing Mifi say this, Leerin's eyes widened, and in response Naruki started to make up something to cover up for her shock.

"Yeah. Calling him this makes it seem a lot friendlier. How about we give you a nickname as well?"

"Eh?"

"Hmm... Li-chan? Lin-chan? Like that? Or maybe LeeeRIN♪ (Change of inflection) seems pretty good as well, but it's a bit hard to distinguish from a normal Leerin."

"Hmm... Although you can't tell the difference immediately...?"

"Yeah... Then, what do you think would be a good nickname for her, Mei-chi?"

"Eh?"

Meishen's face showed an expression like she had suddenly been hit by someone.

Of course, she was listening to the conversation, but you couldn't tell from looking at her expression.

She showed that expression reflexively on her face as if it were a conditioned response.

They seemed to be happily conversing, and from the looks of it there was nothing strange going on.

(Chi...)

Being looked at with eyes like that, so uncomfortable.

"Ri... Is Rin-chan ok?"

She still felt discomfort in her heart.

"Ah, I thought it would be this one."

"Yeah, I think that name is pretty good too."

The two of them expressed their agreement and Leerin gave a wry smile.

Their eyes met again. She had seen people like Meishen before, so she just smiled and didn't pursue the meaning behind her words.

(Uu.....!)

That was exactly the reason why her sins were building up.

(I, I secretly read her letter.)

That event hung upon her heart heavily.

Although she said it wasn't on purpose, if she could she would try and explain it away. But behavior like reading other people's private letters was still unacceptable even if she did admit her fault.

Leerin doesn't even know that this had happened, which made it impossible for her to admit to doing it and to apologize.

When she was apologizing to Layfon she was forgiven, but that only happened because Naruki accidentally let it slip. If she didn't, perhaps Meishen would never have been able to apologize to Layfon.

For Meishen, the act of secretly reading Leerin's letter gave her the first glimpse into the dark side of her heart. The fact that there was a darkness hidden deeply within her terrified her.

Meishen felt as if the core of her body was as cold as ice and she shivered. Even though there wasn't any air conditioning, the summer season was about to arrive and it was hot as if several people were cramped together in a tight space. Even so, she still felt cold inside. The train arrived at the student council station.

"What are you doing here of all places?"

The student council complex was comprised of a tall building with a steeple at its tip where Zuellni's flag was raised high, surrounded by a circular school building. Within the tall building, there was the student council president's office, meeting rooms for the student council members and the office area for those members' assistants. In the circular building surrounding it there were the offices of the heads of the various disciplines in the school and the student council for those subdivisions as well as a reception area and meeting rooms.

Yesterday, Leerin was locked in one of those little meeting rooms in the circular building.

"That..." They walked together to the reception area and Leerin put on a face saying 'how do I answer?' in response to Mifi's question. Then she started to answer it.

There wasn't much left of the distance between the tram station and the reception area. Naruki saw the people standing over there first, and so Leerin stopped her story.

"Captain?"

In front of the wide glass window of the reception area stood Naruki's Captain. She had short, blonde hair, a pointed chin, and she looked like she was made of glass. But if you looked at her personality and actions, then the type of glass she was made of would probably be very strong. Everybody who saw her would probably hold their breath in concentration and their gazes would probably turn dull.

Naruki's voice was carried across and Captain... Nina lifted her head.

"Ah, coming."

It looked like she was waiting for Leerin. She wanted to know why Leerin was with Meishen and the others, but she wasn't too bothered about it.

"Leerin Marfes."

"Ah... Present."

"In yesterday's test, you received a very good score. You passed the test. But if you are only staying in the short term for studies we cannot give you a scholarship, but part of your school fees will be free."

"Ah, is that so?"

Leerin was happy about the partial reduction of the school fees. Meishen saw this, and Naruki didn't miss it either.

"Weren't you worried about the test?"

"No, because I worked hard." She didn't make a sound of annoyance, neither did she reveal an overjoyed smile.

"Rin-chan has officially entered Zuellni!" Mifi shouted out in surprise, causing Meishen to understand the meaning of their conversation.

"Oh, the student council president said that there won't be any roaming buses anytime soon, and since you already came to an academy city it would be a waste not to study here."

"Uwah! Really? If it was me, I would just play, and keep playing until I couldn't move anymore."

"You shouldn't think too hard about that kind of thing." Hearing Mifi's words, Naruki propped up her head.

Leerin replied with a smile. "Because during battles they constantly limit the flow of roaming buses, at the worst it will be impossible to travel to any other cities for the next year. Is that ok?"

"Whether or not it's ok, since you're trapped at a foreign city you might as well stay here for a while."

"Yeah, now that you mention it..."

"Speaking of which, could you tell me your name?"

"Ah, ah.. ah.."

Meishen felt a little surprised, she saw Nina wavering. From Nina's words, the two of them seemed to know each other.

"Eh, so you two still don't know each other?"

"Yeah."

"What the, I thought you guys already knew each other!" Mifi thought so as well.

"Sorry about that. I am Nina Antalk, the captain of the squad which Layfon belongs to, the seventeenth."

Nina held out her hand, and Leerin shook it.

As expected, Nina moved very quickly.

"Back to what we were talking about before, why was the report given to you, Captain?"

This kind of thing was meant to be done by the office people who were working within the door in front of them, not by the unrelated Military Arts department, and definitely not by a platoon leader like Nina Antalk.

"Yeah." Nina nodded her head. "Well, staying here short term means that she can't stay in the detention facilities. That's why we have to find her temporary lodging. The first year dorms are almost completely full, so she might as well come to my empty dorm. The dorm head had work so she won't return until night." As she said this, she looked at Leerin.

"As for transportation, going shopping is a little inconvenient, but other than that, it's a comfortable place to live in. The rent isn't too expensive, so if you're interested in moving there, just register. Anyways, just come to my place, okay?"

"Sure."

Leerin nodded her head, and that's what she decided to do.

In order to get her luggage, everybody got on the train going towards the detention facilities with Nina. On the train, Nina started talking again.

"I heard from Layfon that you make very good food."

"No, it isn't as good as he says."

"We had to go ask the dorm head for military funds for your welcome party but the two people left behind in the dorm, me and another girl, are very bad at cooking."

"The welcome party isn't really necessary, but as for the food, I'll cook it. Also, if you would just call me Leerin, that would be great."

"Thanks, Leerin."

Nina's expression relaxed. No matter how you looked at her, she seemed to be perfect, but she just wasn't very good at cooking and it was pretty cute.

Leerin thought so as well, and smiled kindly at Nina.

"Hey, if it's a cook, we already have one!"

"Oh?"

"Ahh, if that's the case then I'll leave it to you. We've got quite a bit of money, but is this ok? Is it too far away?"

"It's ok, we won't be late. We've got a bodyguard!"

"Umm, are you talking about me?"

Mifi had cut into the conversation, unbidden, and Meishen couldn't stop her. She had tried to keep her as quiet for a long as possible and you could only hear her muffled sounds of "Mummf." After that she had gotten free and Mifi's suggestion had been accepted.

She couldn't escape even if she wanted to.

Seeing Leerin's smiling face, Meishen could only tremble.



Some of the labs used for experimental purposes by the Construction Division were located in Nina's dormitory. This explained the stuff occupying most of the space, making it hard to walk. So, Nina suggested that she return to the dorm by herself to clean up the mess, while Meishen and the others got off from the station before to go shopping and afterwards everyone would meet up.

The military funds went from Nina's hand into Leerin's.

"The dorm head loves to cook, so she should have all sorts of kitchen utensils. As for the food, just pick what you like and buy it!"

In any case, Nina seemed to have an apathetic attitude to cooking, and just left those words.

Meishen wanted to see her most basic needs or wants. Being a person who thought about the menu every day, this was really torturous for her.

What did Leerin want to make?

There was a shopping street in front of the station and it was lined with a variety of shops packed closely together. There weren't only groceries on sale here, but many daily necessities could be bought as well. These small-scale shopping streets focused around the areas adjacent to residential areas. As they strolled through the shopping street, Meishen and the others practically became Leerin's entourage. As soon as Leerin arrived at the shopping street, she began to zealously check the products on sale at Zuellni, and she couldn't even hear the other three's words.

And then she stopped at one of the stores.

This was a restaurant. The variety of dishes available here were extremely popular with the students too lazy to cook. Of course, even those who did cook would come here occasionally as long as they lived the life of a student.

The business at this restaurant was booming.

Leerin looked at the dishes. Sometimes, you could find dishes that even Meishen didn't know of and couldn't cook.

As a result of the isolation of the cities, there was a great variety among food strains. Using meat as an example, basic types of meat included beef, pork, and poultry as the three main types. If mutations occurred, the variety of meat would increase exponentially. These new types of meat would then be absorbed after classification and improvement. Because of the different environments of each city, the actual improvements would also be different. As a result of this, many different things actually tasted the same when eaten.

The Academy City was a mixing arena for people with different eating customs. With experimental types of produce mixed into the dishes at the restaurant, Meishen couldn't name many items in the dishes either.

Quietly listening to an explanation of the variety of foods used in this restaurant, Leerin understood and was already wandering through her next target, the grocery store. She looked at the meat and peeked at the vegetables. The types of vegetables available were even more diverse. But as for the basic green-yellow vegetable, recognizing it by looking at the leaves and the roots was pretty easy.

You could eat it raw, but when broiled or boiled it would taste even better. That was how Meishen described the vegetable to Leerin.

As they were doing this, Nina returned.

"You guy's still haven't finished shopping?"

Seeing Nina's surprised reaction, Leerin calmly replied, "No, but we've pretty much decided what's going to be on the menu tonight."

However, she didn't immediately start shopping. After looking at all the products first, Leerin proceeded to the next store.



And then she browsed through another store, then another.

Finally, she had browsed through all of the grocery stores.

Nina couldn't endure it anymore and asked "Then... Exactly what are we going to make? " Leerin had carefully looked through all of the stores, but she ended up not buying anything.

"Enn..."

Moving her gaze from the products on display to her shopping list, Leerin started by recalling the names of all the pre-made frozen foods she had seen in grocery stores and other stores she had visited. Afterwards, if she linked them with Grendan dishes not only could she name them all but she could also say how to cook the said dish.

"So if we bought all of this.....?"

Of the things that Leerin chose none of them were very expensive, all things within the boundaries of family cooking. Also, all the ingredients she had seen from other stores before had been bought.

"This won't do, if it's like this....." said Leerin as she looked through all the shelves. From behind her, you could see that she was brimming with a bold spirit.

"From what I've seen from before, there is always some margin of difference in each store's quality and price. Is it because of different methods of storage? Regardless, not buying the best ingredients from a shopping street is unacceptable in both aspects."

This probably meant that ingredients that fell neatly in between price and quality were the best choices.

"So this is what we chose in the end. Then, seeing as we bought so much stuff, we should split it up between everyone to carry."

After hearing this, Nina finally relaxed. Everyone was affected by Leerin's bold spirit, and they had all become nervous without noticing.

"Ah, that's right."

Leerin, who was walking about in high spirits returned before Meishen.

"Eh?"

"I'm sorry. At the beginning having said what I was supposed to say, I forgot to tell you that I am very keen on judging." As she said this, Leerin gave the money to Meishen. This was part of the military pay.

If it's like this, then basically...

She gave more than half the money to Meishen.

"These words will be enough, so can I ask Meishen-chan to make the desserts? I heard on the tram that making sweets was your forte, right?"

"Yes, ok!"

"Then, I'll leave it to you!"

"Ah, wait a moment; you're still holding some stuff right?" Nina chased after the brisk paced Leerin.

Meishen and the others stayed behind and blankly stared at Leerin's disappearing shadow.

Mifi gave a wry smile and laughed as she said "Fufu, there's a cooking showdown already?"

"Don't know if you've noticed already, but Leerin's evaluating gaze seemed very serious to me."

"Isn't this exactly why? For the 10,000 year dull, definitely dull, King of Dullness for the convergence of countless titles of dullness within one body, Layton, for Rin-chan to hand out this challenge to Mei-chan isn't strange at all."

"How can this be? Of course, there is a probability that it could be like that. About the contents of that letter, although Layton didn't notice, Leerin could probably feel something in the reply."

"Eh? Eehh?"

Putting it this way made it complicated, but right now Meishen wasn't thinking about this, but rather about how to apologize to Leerin.

She never thought Leerin would ignite a passion for battle inside her.

...She might have even been taken as a rival. No, no, not searching for a chance to apologize is unacceptable.

"Well, see, retreating here is not an option."

"Huh?"

"That's right, you can't just raise your hands and surrender."

"Huh? Why!?"

The other two had already acknowledged this fact, yet Meishen still had no idea what these two were thinking.

"Then let's go all out shopping!"

"Yeah, we can't lose in such a place."

"Ah, that's right, what's Mei-chan going to buy?"

"You shouldn't try to make something you aren't good at! But, you don't have much time left. In that time before, Leerin might have already chosen some dishes in accordance with her cooking speed and skill and then bought the ingredients for those dishes."

"It seems that there's no choice but to make a cake! It's the most likely to succeed. Regarding Meishen's speed at making a cake, she is actually very capable!"

"But still, I think that making the right amount is very important. About enough for seven to eight people."

"Is it going to be triple layer or a wedding style cake? If it's something like that, I would really like to see it."

"Forget about it! How does using fruits to decorate it and making it look professional sound?"

"Yeah, I've decided. I'll make it like that." Even though she didn't completely understand it herself.

The two of them had never seen Meishen making cakes before; neither did they have experience controlling the fire when baking the cake, so all they knew about was the theoretical act of making cake.

Right now, Meishen, who couldn't keep up with the other two had been tossed aside, and the other two were continuing their conversation.

"Then, let's start."

"We've got to start picking the ingredients too!"

"Huh? Eh? What?"

Meishen still hadn't figured out what was going on, and was dragged away by the other two.



Nina's residence, which also became Leerin's residence from yesterday onwards, was a dormitory which was beautiful beyond belief. The entire structure had a classical style to it, making it both cute and elegant. Even though it was removed after its construction, the "Building division practice area" left behind some debris, but Meishen still envied Nina who was able to live in such a place.

That was the situation which Meishen saw before entering the building.

But considering the small size of each room, the number of rooms which the building housed was considerable, so it had to have a common room large enough to fit all the people who lived in it. Even if there wasn't such a room, in front of the hall, there was already more than enough room for a party.

But today, they wouldn't be using the common room. There were only seven people in total, so using the huge room would make it seem lonely.

Naruki, Mifi, Nina and another student who lived here named Leu, began to decorate the area that they were going to use as the dining area.

Inside the kitchen, there was only Leerin and Meishen.

However, the atmosphere showed no signs of hostility.

Meishen was very surprised. That was because not only was the designated party area huge, so was the kitchen. It had no problem housing up to five people cooking at the same time.

Leerin placed the ingredients on the central table in the kitchen, and put on her apron.

"Next is....." She quietly whispered.

Leerin picked up a knife, and began to check its condition. Running her finger across the knife blade, she carefully observed it. Her mouth seemed to ask, "Which smith forged this?" and then she fell quiet.

The entire process was precise yet fast, without a shred of hesitation. Meishen couldn't even find a pause where she could successfully cut in.

The water in the pot was bubbling and the hot water was boiling. In this time, she placed the quickly sliced ingredients into the pot just like that.

The sound of the knife cutting up vegetables formed a steady rhythm and the sound of the fried bread crackling in the oil embellished the rhythm as if forming a melody.

In the midst of all this sound, Leerin's cooking proceeded methodically. She wasn't flustered, nor could you see any signs of distress. Leerin hummed a song while she worked, leaving the impression of someone who had enough room for more even though she was already handling a huge task.

Her expression was one of complete enjoyment, thought Meishen. Her imagination ended and she came to. This isn't the time to be spacing out!

(If she didn't act any faster)

She realized she no longer had any time to train her competitiveness which Mifi and Naruki had spoken of. It was already evening, and from the progress Leerin made it wasn't long before the dish was completed.

At the side of the kitchen, she began to prepare making the cake. As she preheated the oven, she made some essential preparations.

She steamed the chocolate until it melted. Then she began mixing the eggs and other ingredients together, adding the chocolate that was just melted as well as frozen butter and an appropriate amount of wine. After adding other ingredients into the mix, Meishen then proceeded to the eggbeater, beating the egg whites into a fine foam. Then mixing this with the other mixture, she let it set and placed it into the oven.

After all this, she had finished for the time being.

".....Aya!"

She was short of breath. "What about Leerin?" thought Meishen.

Originally, Meishen had intended to go help Leerin after she had finished baking the cake, but when she turned around instead she found Leerin watching her actions with great interest.

"Ah, sorry," apologized Leerin with a wry smile. Her smile without any malicious intent was instead filled with an expression of fascination, revealing her undoubtable capabilities.

"When did you finish? It's really surprising. It looks really nice."

Behind Leerin, the completed dishes were lined up in a row.

"Wow, it seems you're used to making many kinds of dishes."

From what Layfon said, Leerin had grown up with him in the same orphanage, and there she was in charge of cooking and organizing meals. And then she imagined of Leerin before she arrived that with her attitude of buying ingredients which were both fresh and economical, she was sure that everyone in the orphanage enjoyed delicious meals daily.

Making delicious dishes out of cheap ingredients required sufficient cooking and preparation time. However, her attitude of taking the least time possible to both cook and prepare was what Meishen believed was most impressive.

Why would she understand these things? Meishen was constantly thinking about this.

In the past, she had opportunities to cook together with Layton. At that time, he was talking about Leerin. That happy look on Layton's face as he spoke about it surely meant that he treasured that memory!

What kind of person was Leerin? Meishen was constantly wondering about this. If she could compare her image with the person in question, perhaps she would know.

However, Meishen's image of Leerin was completely off. The bad thing about imagination was that if you didn't pay attention for just a moment you would float into space, or you would fall into a deep valley. Just who was this Leerin person? Was she really that Leerin which was so revered, or was she not as great as Meishen thought? It was a pity, seeing as how pointless it was to be blindly guessing like this.

Even if Leerin was less skilled than Meishen, Meishen had fantasized a comparison between the two of them.

In reality, their opponents were themselves.

But right now, was Leerin better or worse than Meishen? The results were very clear: Leerin was superior.

Whether it was socializing or cooking, she was good at all of them. And on top of that she was very smart and beautiful.

Meishen couldn't find anything to say. What she wanted to say she was too shy to talk about. Doing things without others knowing was more like herself.

"The thing is, the only thing I can't make are desserts. You're really good, making it in such a short time!" said Leerin as she walked to the container that held the completed cake and stuck her finger into it, licking the cream.

"Tasty!"

Swaying with delight, a completely honest sound came from Leerin.

"I'm really pleased~"

Looking at the delighted Leerin, Meishen couldn't take it anymore. It was unbearable, thinking of how she took her fantasies of comparing herself and Leerin and used this opportunity to realize it, as well as her stupid actions when she first learned of Leerin's existence.

"I'm sorry!"

There was no prefix in her words as Meishen lowered her head.

It was a little surprising when Meishen did that with absolutely no hesitation.

Eh~~?

Even though she was apologized to, frankly Leerin was still very perplexed about it.

Meishen then told Leerin how she had read her letter.

"Which letter!?" asked Leerin as a previously unseen dizzying blush of shyness tinged her cheeks.

She wasn't angry. On this point, she was very similar to Layfon.

Even when she felt angry at other people's actions, she didn't know how to deal with such situations. She was like this in the orphanage. When she became the head chef at ten and started cooking, she watched the younger kids stirring up trouble everywhere. As a result, she naturally formed two differing personalities. That second personality did not oppose the character that she was born with, rather it was a distortion of the original. At critical points in time Leerin usually expressed her inner self, yet this time it did not occur.

In other words, she didn't know how to be angry. This kind of unorthodox action, and to think that someone would actually cross that line of morality... Yet, when she met with these kinds of actions, she just couldn't get angry. Leerin didn't have a reaction more extreme than simply being embarrassed when she found out that someone had read her letter to Layfon.

Leerin understood what Meishen did wasn't usual. If one of the kids at the orphanage had peeked at other people's letters, she guessed that she probably wouldn't have given a second thought about slapping them.

And also, Meishen was apologizing for her actions.

Then should she slap her? Should she call her a despicable, disgraceful scum?

(Sigh~~)

In the end, she didn't know what to do.

"Forget it."

She had thought about it for a day and an age, and ended up saying that sentence. She wasn't angry in the first place, and even if she were, she would have to let herself calm down.

Meishen didn't raise her head even after hearing those words.

"Even if I got angry at you in the heat of the moment, it would still leave many awkward complications," said Leerin softly.

Meishen finally lifted her head, with her eyes glistening with tears as they threatened to spill out.

"But..."

"Even though I'll feel embarrassed... Ah... How should I say this?" Leerin thought about this for a minute, unable to find the words to make Meishen understand.

"I suppose I would have done the same!" That's the only way she could say it, because Leerin knew the reason why Meishen had done such a thing.

(If their positions had been reversed)

One day, if she had received a letter from Meishen to Layfon... She thought of this.

Putting whether or not she would actually read the letter aside, she knew that the temptation to do so would be hidden deeply within her heart.

Layfon didn't notice, right? On multiple occasions towards her, as well as with many other people's feelings towards him he was infallibly slow. This was one thing about him that never changed.

That personality of his was more than enough to warrant her chase from Grendan after him, yet she was unable to change it. Wasn't it something that would be easily changed? "It seems like that would be the way it is," sighed Leerin with resignation.

She could see a surprised light in Meishen's eyes.

"What did she think of her own position?" thought Leerin. Layfon's lover? If it was like that... If it was like that, then if she came to Zuellni earlier, a little bit earlier then there probably wouldn't be any problems like this.

And then, she wouldn't know what she would do if she had read Meishen's name in a letter, or if she had read Nina's (who was in the dining room) name, or what she would do if there was another girl's name in the letter.

"...Leerin-chan"

"Meishen-chan, what's the matter?"

"Ah....."

Meishen was drying her tears with a handkerchief.

"Is the cake ok?"

"Ah!"

Seeing a flustered Meishen tripping towards the oven, peeking inside urgently, Leerin crossed her arms and laughed.

"Next up, I'll wrap things up and finish the rest of the cooking in one go!"

Just what exactly am I doing?

Hiding that fragment of her heart, Leerin hummed a song as she baked the bread.

But she had made up her mind. She had decided to officially accept that short-term scholarship which she had been so hesitant about after the exam.



When all the food was placed on the tables within the dining hall and everything was prepared, the dorm head returned.

"My apologies, I should have been the one cooking, yet I let a guest do it!" said the head.

"It's ok; I'm already used to cooking!"

Meishen noticed Leerin's cautious reply.

"En? What's wrong, Mei-chan?"

"Eh? No- nothing!" She hurriedly lowered her head, covering her blushing cheeks with her hands.

Meishen thought that Leerin really was amazing.

If it were Meishen, what would she have done? Would she have been angry? She probably wouldn't be. No, she wouldn't be angry. She thoroughly understood her own feeble personality. But keeping her composure while cursing the person behind her smiling facade was entirely possible.

Practically gazing at her dark thoughts, so shallow in her heart, irritated her.

But Leerin was different. She forgave her. She didn't only forgive her with words, but also with all her heart.

Even if she wasn't like this, she was still far ahead, without the slightest similarity with Meishen. She was speaking with a smile. Speaking to her with that nickname which Mifi had thought up, her familiarity made it feel like a dialogue between close friends.

Could she do such a thing?

No, she didn't think she could.

The atmosphere of Leerin's welcoming party was very warm and welcoming. Everyone was praising Leerin's cooking, and Meishen thought it was delicious as well.

How on earth did she manage to cook such a large variety of dishes in such a short time and make them taste delicious as well?

Leerin also lauded Meishen's cake. The cream did well to control the sweetness of the chocolate, all layered in the spongy cake. And Meishen had decorated the dessert with many different fruits. What a pretty cake!

Seeing her taste Meishen's cake so eagerly, she felt really fortunate.

"Layfon isn't here. I feel bad for the rest of the team that isn't here too..."

"I understand." Hearing Nina's words, Leerin nodded.

"It really is a pity. I still wanted to ask him a couple of questions." Mifi's words were sincere.

"It doesn't matter, really, seeing as tomorrow she'll be a first year as well, so we'll have many chances to trade stories later."

"Ah..."

On the other side, Nina suddenly cried out.

"I forgot! Leerin, you're a third year student!"

"Huh?"

Everyone on site was frozen with surprise.

"Your test results were extremely good. The student council president thought that it would be better for you if you went straight to the third year class. I'm guessing you'll probably be in my class."

Nina revealed the hidden meaning behind the student council president's words.

"Wow~~! She skipped grades? This is the first time I've ever heard of this."

"But it happens in schools in normal cities as well."

However, with all the latest publications, information and technology absorbed into academy cities, skipping grades was a rare occurrence. The reason students didn't have to specialize in any specific area between the grades one and three was to allow the students to learn what the schools considered basic knowledge selected to teach from their massive store of information.

But despite all these improbabilities, Leerin still skipped grades.

It was because she really was extremely capable.

"Well, you have to realize that short-term study periods are also taken into consideration when they decide to allow a student to skip grades. It would benefit a student more to learn things at a third year level compared to a first year's, right?"

"If you put it like that, it seems more probable" said Leerin in response to Nina's words.

Leerin's quick understanding enforced Meishen's high regard for her.

She probably couldn't catch up to her even if she worked hard.

Other than feeling slightly lonely, Meishen thought that something else was amiss.

Of course, after returning to their dormitories, she would still feel angry about Mifi leaving so quickly.



...and today, she arrived here.

(What to do?)

Layfon was sleeping, and apart from the two of them, there was nobody else in the room.

It was a personal room.

A single room.

(Uuwaaaahh...)

Meishen cried out loudly within her heart, extremely nervous, feeling herself perspiring heavily.

(No, wait a moment, you. Don't forget your purpose. What did you come here for today?)

She has to control herself, she must.

Yes,... she came here today because of Mifi. She...

"Do your best and ask Layfon out on a date. Do whatever you can! In the face of superiority in terms of time spent together, the happy times you've shared will be wiped away in the blink of an eye! So right now, you can't stop!"

Because she said it like that.

In the dormitory, Meishen realized she couldn't beat Leerin at cooking. The result made Mifi resentful, seeing as how she was already helping Meishen.

Meishen felt that way as well, and she thought that being dishonest wasn't ok either.

She wanted to be more honest.

For this, if she didn't experience it with her own body, she wouldn't understand.

For this, she promised to go on a date.

Layfon, he would probably accept it. It had to be a time when Layfon had no other appointments. Over here, all the military artists were preparing for the celebrations for the Military Art's victory, and were extremely busy. She didn't know when he would have time.

But Layfon probably didn't have any special feelings towards Meishen, and his attitude towards the date would probably be one of going out with a friend to have some fun.

That was the biggest problem. His slowness in that area.

(It was probably impossible today. The nurse had said that he probably wouldn't wake up before midnight.)

Yes, even if it was like that, Meishen still understood Mifi's point. Then it was probably okay to just leave the get-better gifts and leave... right?

But...

Layfon, lying over there in a vulnerable position you could never see normally.

He had slept in class before.

He had slept on the lawn outside the library as well.

But if you spoke to him he would get up immediately. Because Layfon was a Military Artist, even though she didn't know if he was a very strong one, she had never seen him off-guard when dealing with anyone.

When he was sleeping, however...

Yeah...

So she wanted to do something.

So a strange feeling took root in her heart.

"Ennn..."

Layfon turned over while sleep talking, causing Meishen to hold her breath. But he didn't make any other actions, continuing to sleep.

Even if he was a Military artist he couldn't resist the force of sleeping pills.

If she were to do it, this was her only chance.

This kind of chance couldn't possibly appear again. If she thought of it like this, if she didn't do it now she would never have another chance at it ever again.

Even the timid Meishen thought so. This idea possessed her, forcing her to think this way. A single room, two people together alone, her own feelings, Leerin... the results of various thoughts made her unable to even think of backing away.

(Wait, just wait a little longer.)

Her rationality was screaming out at her earlier. But her mind was already overflowing with thoughts. She didn't feel cold but her warm shoulders and hands were shaking uncontrollably.

But her body was thirsting for it.

(Uuuuu...)

She had already decided to come clean.

She realized that she was going to do a despicable thing to a sleeping person. But... but... but...

(Uuu...)

She stood up, leaning close to the bed.



Layfon slept on regardless, his face serene with both eyes closed, breathing calmly.

She placed her face close to his and brushed back her hair.

She felt Layfon's breath tickle her cheek.

She moved slowly.

(Wait... Wait just a bit more.)

Her silliness, her shyness were all suppressed by her singular desire. The desire to bend a little lower. The only obstacle to sating that desire was that tiny resisting thought of "he's still sleeping."

Had Leerin watched him like this ever since childhood?

She gazed at him, and continued gazing at him unblinkingly. Meishen half-opened her mouth, words caught endlessly within.

"Leerin."

The resisting thought.

(It's ok, right?)

Even though she still had her doubts, it was too late to stop now.

(... En)

It was a gentle warmth, and in a moment, the two people touched each other.

It was a forced contact.

Meishen was overcome by all sorts of emotions and driven by them, she fled the sick room.

Layfon, left behind...

"I've already had plenty of red vegetables!" His sleep talk was undisturbed.

In this room which wasn't cold or baleful, those words quickly spread out and vanished.

Lunchtime of You and Me

Layfon and I visited the same bento store in the morning to buy lunch. A double deluxe bento. Even if one had suffered mental trauma or had a dissatisfied heart, upon becoming hungry one still had to eat. The lid of the bento store's container jumped up, but was stopped by the thick rubber bands wrapped around it.

Layfon had also chosen the double deluxe bento.

However, only Layfon's bento had a slight difference.

It was just like how it was made at the Silver Terrace, that childhood friend had said.

"Isn't it all still takeout!"

She actually had said what I didn't dare to.

Was saying that a responsibility as a bento store worker? What is this?

Layfon had tried to refute it, but totally lacked momentum. Afterwards, he had fled the shop from before that girl.

What a beast, moreover that guy basically couldn't be killed.

.....Though even if he died it wouldn't do me much good.

We walked towards the classroom, and ate our bentos on a bench near the school building.

"Come to think of it, today Trinden-san didn't take care of you?"

Meishen Trinden.

Probably the cutest girl in our class. Even if I didn't really like her submissive eyes and attitude. However, the males in our class all claimed "that type is good". Of course, I was also a male, so some parts of that girl still attracted me. For example the things under her clothing that strongly made themselves known, which to males could be considered the most powerful lethal weapons, right?

The guy who could eat the handmade bento of that kind of girl every day definitely would be cursed yet had nothing to say.

"Ah~"

Layfon pierced a big fried object with his fork, letting out an ambiguous voice.

"Sounds like your body is uncomfortable and you need to rest a bit."

"Is that so."

Judging from Layfon's expression, he wasn't able to perceive the truth of the situation. No, it could be that this guy hadn't realized anything at all. Although he had said something along these lines before, this guy's ability at perceiving human emotions towards him was deficient to enough of a degree to surprise people.

Meishen Trinden's mind was easy to understand.

He had seen several scenes of her speaking with other males. But the her at those times always wore an expression as if she were going to cry and would quickly escape afterwards. Otherwise it would be her two friends who would come act as a wall.

The sole male that she could speak alone with was Layfon. Moreover it seemed that they were from different homelands. Meishen and the others had come from the Transit City Joeldem by roaming bus. Even if I don't know of Grendan, Joeldem is a famous city that even I recognize.

This kind of girl, and the only male she could speak with was Layfon. This was a fact that even the first-year students all realized.

However, this guy might truly not be aware of the situation.

If that were the case, this would really be ignorance on the level of a crime! Even if the one being harmed couldn't really say anything, even if it was possible that all the girls of Zuellni would collectively hold hostility to this sort of ignorance.

But, why didn't this sort of thing happen?

"In the end, where are you uncomfortable?"

Maybe, what that guy has isn't just ignorance, but perhaps some kind of tender ignorance. After all, even to me whom he didn't really have a good relationship with, he also spoke kind words.....

Impact of Childhood 02

The environment had changed.

That was Nina's impression. Though she also thought of many other things, that was the first and foremost.

The time for her to open her eyes in the morning came. She had always been woken up by the noisy dorm head, but for now that situation had changed.

After changing her clothes, Nina was led to the smell of breakfast, walking out to the corridor. It was the aroma of butter used to bake bread. The person making breakfast had made dough at night, and baked it in the morning. That aroma had already completely transformed Nina's remaining sleepiness into appetite.

Leu next door had also been led by the aroma. She had been classmates with Nina during their first year, and by chance, was still in the same dorm. She looked at Nina from above her glasses.

"Good morning."

"Good morning."

"Aah, really. That smell can really make someone get up in the morning!"

"I know!"

Accordingly, Leu's tone was mixed with the trace of the smile, and the two of them walked to the dining room.

Finished food had already been place on the table of the dining room. Bread and eggs were arranged, along with soup. As a Military Artist, Nina always worked hard to eat breakfast, but Leu just ate in a daze. She always moved according to her appetite, so there was no need to worry.

There was bread, ham, and cheese. She made it into a sandwich as she ate.

Did Layfon eat like this? Nina, sitting in her seat, didn't think so.

Among the people who had woken up, the tardy dorm head who had crawled out from somewhere had also sat down. Then, the last person finally showed her face in the dining room.

There was tea in the container in her hands. Moreover, she had boiled it separately according to the preferences of differing people.

"Good morning."

Across from the steam of the soup, the new roommate and extremely short-term student showed a smile that perfectly matched the morning.

Leerin Marfes.

Layfon's childhood friend.



It was about time to leave the dorm. Selina, the dorm head, always stayed very late doing research, so she still needed rest until noon. The third year students..... actually, all of the dorm residents other than the dorm head, had gone to classes.

Because the summer was drawing near, the cool air in the morning had left. One would sweat under her clothes after walking slightly.

"How is it, are you already used to things?"

Walking on the road to the tram stop, Leu asked Leerin.

"Nn, I'm about used to it."

Leerin and Layfon were the same age. That meant that she was a different age from Nina and Leu, but they were in the same grade.

Considering the age difference, she should use honorifics, but on the other hand they were classmates.

That was very troublesome, so they just used normal language to converse.

"There are a lot of different areas of the textbooks, but I can still cope with the minor ones. Though, there are many interesting books in the libraries here."

Leerin's expression was very vivid, and she seemed extremely happy.

When they had finally reached the tram stop, her arms and back were all sweaty. The space enclosed by the air filter didn't have wind, and clouds were very rare. Everywhere was a broad blue color, and the sun seemed like a hole that had been raised in the sky.

"It's so hot today!"

Nina spoke, feeling that her throat was dry.

"Nn-- it's a bit hot."

Leu said that.

Leerin raised her head to look at the sky.

The shadow left by the awning over the tram stop was a little too small.

"Because we're nearing summer. If this goes on, they'll lift the ban on swimming in the cultivation lake in a month, right?"

"Ah, they have those kinds of lakes here too, huh."

"They do. Ah, do you play with water guns?"

"No, well, a little....."

Afterwards, the two of them talked about swimsuits, and Nina who was accidentally excluded walked to a nearby vending machine.

When normal morning classes finished, Nina walked out of the classroom. There were specialized Military Arts classes in the afternoon.

Around this time, platoon captains were generally very busy.

Today, they would also carry out a group mock battle on the practice field. Nina planned to walk to the practice field before there were too many people.

Though it had just entered the lunch hour, there were Military Artists around her who were heading towards the practice fields like Nina.

Among them, there were people she recognized.

Speaking of which, that place was very close to the first-year buildings. And close to those buildings, there were shops selling stationary as well as food stores. The food stores that proliferated around the school buildings were all corresponding to the degree to which people were concentrated

there. Of course, this was also greatly related to the fact that the city was all students.

Someone she recognized walked into Nina's vision.

Hence, she deliberately slowed her pace.

Leerin and Layfon were walked there.

Behind them was the bento store that Leerin had begun working at. Had Layfon come here to buy lunch? She had heard that Naruki's friend made lunch for him, so had she stopped because Leerin was here? Was it only coincidence? That wasn't possible. It wasn't yet time for work, right? No, she had probably left class using work as a reason, so she had arrived here even earlier than Nina.

The two of them spoke very happily.

'Ah, because the two of them are childhood friends!'

Nina thought this, speeding up her walk.

At that time, she forgot the fact that she didn't exchange more than a few words a day with her childhood friend Harley.

Yes, she unconsciously forgot about herself.

Nina was the commander on the practice field, and had to shout loudly while overseeing everything. She had to analyze the information received from the Psychokinesist, command the battlefield, and grasp the overall situation. She didn't have to look too closely at what was behind her. But, she couldn't just ignore it. Otherwise, the frontline couldn't be maintained for long.

If they didn't all-out charge when they should have charged, it would leave everyone dissatisfied.

"Thanks for your work."

After two hours of charging through traps, they finally won the difficult battle. The students began leaving the practice field, and captains led other students onto the field.

Gazing to the side, Nina accepted the sports drink that Layfon offered.

They had already changed out of their fighting gear. The practice battlefield had a serious shortage of locker rooms. Some students in the platoons had to return to their own school building locker rooms or their classrooms to change.

"What..... are you doing?"

Her mouth was extremely dry, and her tongue almost couldn't move. She could feel a deep pain in her throat from constantly shouting.

"I'm did things that most soldiers would do."

Layfon was indeed in the group that Nina commanded, but she hadn't heard any reports of him standing out. He was consciously holding back!



But she couldn't get mad because of this. If Layfon went all out, the group mock battle would become meaningless.

"How about I let you command?"

She drank the sports drink in a single sip.

"No way! I never learned how to be a commander."

Actually, first-year Military Arts was all about basic Kei classes, and only from the second year onwards did true group battle training actually begin. At best, first-years had small group battles with three people per side.

"You never learned it in Grendan?"

"Because I became a Heaven's Blade before learning."

"How careless."

"Maybe."

Layfon still stood there with a carefree expression, but Nina sat on a nearby chair to rest for a bit.

"It seems like you're really tired."

"It's very busy on this side. I don't know whether I'll be able to take a vacation this year....."

"Ah....."

"Aren't you also very busy, even when you put on a relaxed expression?"

"Huh, well, during then....." ^[1]

"During then.....?"

"I wasn't teaching techniques, just playing around. If you don't think hard about anything it's very relaxed, though of course I doubt whether it's really good to be that way."

"If you believe that then it would be enough to just think a little."

From his words, she could begin to understand a bit about Layfon.

Indeed, she had once seen Layfon withstand the attacks of nineteen Military Artist students. At the time, she had felt that only Layfon could do such a thing.

But, even if Layfon taught casually, many people would come to learn. That was because everyone had seen that he had overwhelming power.

Compared to that, Nina carried out group battle exercises so diligently, but didn't feel any sort of understanding.

(I always feel like I'm wasting my strength.)

Holding her head, Nina thought.

"Can you become strong like that?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know..... huh."

Nina was dumbfounded, and Layfon put on a completely indifferent expression.

"People who truly want to become strong will become strong even without help. Isn't that the most important thing, more so than teaching methods? One should really pay attention to the basic exercises, so those are the things that I plan to teach.

Truly casual.

"But, what do people with poor reflexes do?"

"If it's below normal..... Isn't it enough if you put in more effort? When I practiced steel thread techniques, people told me 'a year won't be enough'. Actually, at the time, I didn't think that I could master those techniques."

"Uh....."

"This world isn't fair, in both circumstances and ability. If you think there's a difference, then you can't do anything other than put in more work. It's impossible for everyone to have a happy life in this world."

"Even if you can't catch up with hard work?"

"Nn, well, what then?" [2]

Facing Nina's question, Layfon thought seriously.

Of course, could Layfon who was still practically a child reply to that kind of question? Layfon thought.

People's lives were long. So, he definitely didn't have to answer right now. Everything Layfon had said before were the answers of people before him.

The circumstances of an orphan, and extraordinary ability. Though his life wasn't blessed, it wasn't ill-fated. It was a life mixed with happiness and unhappiness, but it could be seen that his fortune wasn't the same as most people. That was definitely one of the criteria by which people's lives were evaluated. It wouldn't be known whether that stone was a pebble or a gem until death.

But, this right now wasn't related.

Layfon didn't really hate it, and didn't scorn or ridicule those weaker than himself, and maybe Layfon didn't have that kind of personality at all. He just considered how to raise his own strength, calmly dealing with the obstacles blocking him from reaching his goal, not caring about the business of others.

He almost didn't care about things outside of his established range.

With that kind of abnormal habit, if several such things occurred rapidly, he might pay a great price.

However, perhaps that was the manner of thinking of a strong person. She feared that might be it.

".....Captain, why are you so interested?"

"I'm not that interested. Layfon, I just want you to be a bit serious towards those people who are training."

"Then, what should I do..... No, speaking of which, your face is very red, Captain."

"Impossible."

Seeing Layfon change the topic, Nina stood up.

She was very thirsty. The sports drink she had just finished off wasn't enough, and she still wanted to drink. Opening the lid of a drink can, she gripped it by the side.

Aah, her throat was so dry.

"Hey, senpai?"

Ah? Had Layfon's expression twisted?

"What is it? Layfon?"

Could it be? He had been careless and showed the expression of a twisted personality? Really, who asked you not to follow a normal way of life.....

"Ah? Hey?!"

Nina didn't remember anything after Layfon's surprised yell.



"She's caught a cold!"

In the medical room of the practice field, the medical student proclaimed.

"It's..... a cold?"

Layfon who had brought Nina to the medical room asked doubtfully.

The student who wore a white hospital gown ignored Layfon's attitude and continued speaking.

"She has a fever and her throat is swollen, so obviously it's a cold, and the reason is that she's been very busy recently. I divided up the medicine, so have her take it when she gets up. If that's not enough then she'll have to go to the hospital."

"Ah, okay."

Taking the common medicine out of the medicine cabinet, Layfon returned to the side of Nina who slept on the bed of the medical room.

"A cold?"

Layfon tilted his head. A cold. The medical student had said that, so it was probably true. Doubting wouldn't do anything.

She had indeed been very busy. It had been said that it was to maintain the morale of the Military Arts students after the battle with Myath, but maybe they were preparing to increase group training while the students

were still positively affected by victory. There were many with packed schedules. It was a blessing though, and Layfon was very thankful that the number of people who came to him for individual training had decreased.

But, following the packed schedule would lead to fatigue in the soldiers and commander. Actually, Nina had been forced to run here and there for various communications even before the practice.

Nina's style that leaned towards defensive warfare but who liked to charge in the front was a bit puzzling. It was particularly easy for her to get fatigued.

A cold..... it was probably that, it should be.

"Um--"

Even so, Layfon still tilted his head.

But, he shouldn't have to worry as much as when she had overused her Kei vein before.

"She could be said to have mastered Raijin, so could it be.....?"

It couldn't be said that he had never thought about it. Layfon also had that kind of feeling. Perhaps it was the natural process of organisms to die not long after being born.

There weren't many normal Military Artists who knew that. There weren't even many Psychokinesists who did, and even less so for Military Artists.

No, maybe Felli had the same kind of feeling.

If it were that way.....?

Medicine.

"Uh--"

She moaned, and moved her head.

In any case, it was very hard to confirm if she was sleeping or not.

In that case.....?

"Well....."

Layfon checked the surroundings. There were no other people in the medical room. This was a spare medical room, and the actual medical room was currently being prepared for the students in the practice. That medical student just now should also be standing by there.

"No one's here, huh."

Layfon scratched his cheek, speaking. He felt a bit embarrassed. But, he still felt that it would be best to confirm first.

"Please don't wake up!"

Saying this, Layfon extended his hand to the sleeping Nina.

Blink.

"....."

"....."

".....What are you doing?"

When he still hadn't touched her forehead yet, Layfon stared at Nina who had opened her eyes. Layfon froze.

"No, I'm not doing anything."

Though he wasn't at such a close distance, Layfon still felt that a cold sweat had broken out on his back. Nina's eyes were properly shaped and fully conscious. The moment their gazes met, Layfon seemed to have a feeling as if he could catch the movement of her eyelashes.

"Move, I can't get up!"

The breath that she exhaled at the same time as she spoke brushed his chin.

Layfon moved.

"How did I fall asleep?"

"It's because you caught a cold."

"A cold?"

Like that, Nina finally realized that she had a fever. Putting her hand on her forehead, she showed a regretful expression.

"At this kind of time, too....."

"That's a message that your body needs rest, and it would be better to listen."

The words seemed comforting, but it was hard to tell whether Nina would take it that way.

He didn't know why Nina was this anxious. Compared to when they had fought with Myath, right now was relaxed. They had fought with the city Myath and won, and the morale of all the Military Artists had risen, so however one looked at it, this was an easy and relaxed environment, but Nina was unexpectedly anxious.

"If you caught a cold, you'll recover after taking some medicine and sleeping."

As if he had finally decided to give up, Layfon sighed after speaking.

"Where's the medicine?"

"Ah, I have it."

Replying, he gave over the medicine he had taken.

".....Ah."

Layfon was still worried as he gave the medicine to Nina. But, Nina didn't hear Layfon's murmur. She got off the hospital bed, using the medical room's faucet to take the medicine.

"Nn, what is it?"

Turning to Layfon who was a bit stiff, Nina tilted her head.

"Ah..... uh, well, please don't use internal Kei."

"What are you saying? Won't using internal Kei promote the drug's effectiveness....."

As she spoke, Nina collapsed again.

It seemed like she had used internal Kei. Kei paths were distributed throughout the body along the nerve networks, and in other words, Kei paths were also spread along blood vessels. If she used internal Kei, it would expand the blood vessels, promote blood flow, and could send the

medicine dissolved in her stomach to various parts of her body in moments.

Of course, the reason she had fallen wasn't only because of the medicine.

Somehow, Layfon's premonition had truly become reality. He thought that as he picked Nina up from where she had fallen.

Then, he imagined how things would be if the worst happened.



"What are you doing?"

Seeing that kind of situation, Leu first widened her eyes, and only later realized the situation. Not only did she obviously understand, but she also had somewhat of a fatalistic attitude.

It was only strange to not fall over from fatigue in such a desperately busy situation. Had that kind of thing finally happened in the third year? It wasn't too far off.

"Uh....."

Nina's kouhai was currently in front of the dorm of Leu and the others. Of course she knew his name, Layfon Alseif. He had come here before, and she often saw him with Nina.

She had also watched their matches.

It was just that, Nina was on his back.

"Since it's a female dorm, I can't go in unauthorized, and no one responded when I pressed the doorbell....."

"Ah- at this time, usually no one's here."

Leu who said this was the same, and if her afternoon classes hadn't been changed into self-study, she wouldn't be here. Normally, Leu would have gone directly to the library, but this time she had only come here because she had planned to return to the dorm to borrow some things from someone else.

But, if Leu hadn't returned early, what would Layfon have done?

"Come in!"

Leu thought while she invited Layfon into the dorm.

Nina slept on Layfon's back, and other than her red cheeks she had no other abnormalities.

Leu asked about Nina's body condition, and was told that she had collapsed because of a cold.

A cold..... Military Artists could catch colds.

She felt that it was a bit hard to believe, and moreover Nina wasn't so susceptible to colds in the first place. Since she had collapsed, maybe it was because she had worked too hard, and her body was reaching its limits.

She felt that she should let Layfon's shoulders get some rest.

"Bring Nina into here room."

"Okay."

Quite straightforward, Leu thought. He didn't beat around the bush, but thought very simply. That was called being pure. This person was the trump card of the seventeenth platoon. He was clearly just a first-year platoon member, but she had heard that he was extremely strong. The Military Artists she was close with had all said this, and moreover their tones were all extremely excited. When Zuellni had gone rampant, he had faced a large number of attacking filth monsters, and had been extraordinarily involved in eliminating them.

How incredible, even though those words had been exaggerated.

But, she still thought 'Is he truly very strong?'. When Nina talked about Layfon, she always had an attitude of being envious while also being unwilling to believe it. Were there other things mixed in as well? Maybe the person talking didn't realize it herself. After being teased by Selina, it seemed that some buds of such things had finally sprouted in her mind. But that person's teasing had contrastingly made Nina's thinking become even more rigid.

Ah, some spice had finally arrived recently.

Then, what should she do? Though Leu's expression hadn't changed, she still felt happy at her friend's change.

As she thought about this, they had already arrived at Nina's room.

Layfon didn't look much at the mostly undecorated room, just moving straight for the bed. The closed-off balcony by the bed was the only place decorated with small things with the style of a young girl, but he didn't look over there either.

Carefully, Layfon prepared to put Nina down.

"Urgh-

Layfon groaned.

The reason was quickly evident, which was that Nina's arms that were around his neck had suddenly applied force.

Nina, who should have been asleep, had her eyes half-open.

"Nina, are you awake?"

"Nn~~"

A voice blurred by sleep.

"Captain, lie on the bed and sleep!"

Layfon spoke a bit painfully.

"No--"

An incredible response.

".....Huh?"

"I won't--, I'm not going~~"

.....Excuse me, please hurry up and return to reality.

Leu reflexively thought that she was dreaming. No, it would be best if she were dreaming.

"Captain..... I'm begging you."

"No--, here is good!"

He didn't know where that kind of sleepy, child-like voice had come from, but her arms still used that much force.

Childish!

Wasn't this way too childish!

Wasn't it..... wasn't it?

"Pff--"

A single word emerged in her mind, and Leu couldn't hold back anymore.

Leu couldn't return to the reality that she knew. No matter what, she couldn't help but..... laugh!

She laughed, laughed loudly. It was an explosive laugh that couldn't be described with words.

She laughed and laughed.

Nina stubbornly puffed her cheeks, and that was funny. Layfon's appearance of not knowing what to do was also funny. Could it be that on the way here, the two of them had constantly been like this? Thinking of that, she couldn't help but laugh.

She had already laughed until her stomach cramped, and she didn't know whether she would die in the process from being unable to breathe.

"Ah..... what was that....."

Leu asked while shaking, still unable to stop laughing. Her stomach really hurt from laughing.

Nina had finally gotten on the bed. But she didn't sleep instantly, and just laid there.

She alternated looking at Layfon and Leu with a stubborn expression.

Her face was very red. Leu extended a still-shaking hand towards Nina's forehead. Nina showed an annoyed expression. But, Leu had already confirmed that Nina's forehead was truly very hot.

"Uh--, this was very hard to explain."

Layfon was a bit hesitant.

So Nina had really been like this on the way here! Had she been seen by others? If she had been noticed, and if it were also someone that recognized her, then that person would definitely have rushed back to their home thinking they had seen a nightmare.

After understanding that it wasn't a nightmare, they definitely would have laughed explosively like Leu.

"Though I think this is related to the cold medicine."

"Huh? Cold medicine? They didn't just put antibiotics in alcohol?" ^[3]

From Nina's condition today, anyone following a normal train of thought would have believed that she had drank alcohol. No one would have thought of anything other than her being drunk.

Would cold medicine cause a patient to enter a strange state of mind?
Don't joke around!

No, could the reason be something similar to alcohol?

"Ah, that's the situation.Or was it?"

"So what's going on?"

Layfon's explanation was to no avail. What had that medical student said?
Was he just a student?

Since Leu had come to Zuellni, she hadn't gotten any big illnesses. She just had the yearly cold, the kind where she would be better after taking medicine. So, she wasn't familiar with Zuellni's levels of medical technology.

"Uh, maybe it's Captain's Kei paths....."

As Layfon explained that.....

"Hot!"

Nina suddenly spoke. She jumped up on the bed, showing a dissatisfied expression. Her face was red with heat, and small beads of sweat seeped from her neck, reflecting light.

Her hands began taking off her clothes.

"Ah, hey-!"

It was a good thing that she could feel hot. Nina twisted her upper body to take off her coat, and also unbuttoned her shirt.

Beneath her shirt was cute lace.....

Though Leu tried stopping her, she was still a Military Artist even when sick. Leu couldn't stop her alone.

"You, hurry up and get out!"

"Ah, aah! Yes!"

The ignorant Layfon hurriedly prepared to leave. But just as he turned around, the door opened.

Why would things be like this?

"What's going on?"

The person who had just returned had heard strange noises, and come over.

After her gaze fell on every person in the room, the present horrors came across her eyes.

".....Ah?"

An expression of being unable to understand.

But that person didn't just stand there unable to understand. What could be seen in those eyes wasn't just pure chaos, but..... a little bit of understanding.

She saw Leu, she saw Nina half of whose body was being covered by Leu, and also saw Layfon nearby them.

"....."

Afterwards, she began moving wordlessly.

Striding into the room, she reached out to Layfon, and grabbed his ear.

"You, get out!"

That voice was almost emotionless.

"Ow, ow, it hurts!"

Layfon whose ear was being pulled was known as the strongest Military Artist in Zuellni. Unexpectedly, he had been pulled out of a room in this manner by a normal girl.

"Well then....."

Leu spoke. Afterwards, she began moving.

From Nina's current state of undress, the current her wasn't an adult.

If she slept like this, then things would end up in a somewhat smoother outcome.

But she wouldn't sleep.

Now, Leu and the others were in the living room. When they had leisure time they would drink tea and chat here. There was a large display here, and high-quality and high-definition entertainment could be shown from it.

But, that display machine wasn't being used right now.

The tea that Leerin had made was on the table, along with the small cakes on saucers that her new friend Meishen had made. There weren't many things left that they hadn't eaten.

"....."

Leerin was speechless.

Leu was also speechless.

".....Well."

Layfon spoke, knowing his low status.

"Um-"

Nina sensed the atmosphere in the room, quickly showing her dissatisfaction.

Displeased, she grabbed Layfon's arm.

Selina wasn't there, and that was probably very fortunate. If she were there, then the situation would definitely have become more chaotic. She

would definitely have found interest, and then would have disturbed the situation by poking her nose into it.

"Well, what's going on?"

Drinking the steaming tea, Leerin continued the topic. Layfon looked at her reproachful eyes that revealed a cold gaze.

Layfon's expression was a bit pained.

"Well. I've never seen this either. The thing she thought was cold medicine and took wasn't actually cold medicine....."

"Aah....."

Then, Leerin understood. Finally, she understood the meaning. But her bad mood still continued.

"What's happened?"

Leu who still didn't understand asked.

"Well, a normal Military Artist wouldn't be able to get up, but incidentally there's also this kind of situation."

"What?"

"I guess her Kei paths have expanded? Or maybe her Kei vein's ability has increased?"

As Layfon searched through his uncertain memory, he said that.

Of course, Leu who wasn't clear on the functioning of Military Artist bodies couldn't understand that.

Military Artists had an organ that normal people didn't, which was called the Kei vein. The so-called Kei was produced whenever a person was active, providing a very weak extra energy. Military Artist possessed an independent, strong, widely connected organ, the Kei vein. This Kei was circulated through the entire body and could enhance the body's abilities. There were also Kei paths that used it to form external destructive energy.

"For most people, their Kei amount won't change, but sometimes that kind of thing happens. There are people whose amount of Kei changes greatly."

"In other words, Nina is currently in that kind of condition?"

"Probably."

"How vague!"

"No, this is the first time I've ever seen a different person like this."

"So it happened to you?"

"Layfon was in quite the condition back then."

Thinking back to the situation from before, Leerin sighed deeply.

"I had never thought such a thing would have happened. Going from six years old to about one year old, and having a constant fever that wouldn't let up."

"That severe? Then....."

She looked at her friend. The red-faced Nina had grabbed on to Layfon with nothing to do, beginning to pull Layfon's hair. Layfon wailed softly. Leerin cast a sharp gaze over there, but she quickly moved her gaze back to the tea by her hands.



(This is extraordinarily interesting.)

She thought this in her heart but didn't say it. On the other hand, Leu continued watching Nina's performance.

She was fevered. Though she hated thermometers and had nothing to measure her body temperature with. But from the feel of it, the heat didn't seem very strong.

"Isn't Nina suffering from that? Or is that topic even related to this condition?"

"When she had just collapsed, the doctor used normal cold medicine, but after she took it....."

"She became strange?"

"Yeah. She kept talking about strange things. It was a bit uncomfortable."

"Wow."

Sort of like she had been hurt. An expression emerged on Layfon's face as if he were sharing some of that pain. Probably, this was related to his hair being pulled by Nina.

"Ah~~, then, how do we cure it in the end?"

Leu still couldn't really believe it in her mind - her body's change combining with medicine to form an intriguing outcome, making the subject's mind return to a childish state. She didn't have any idea why that kind of result would be produced, but it would definitely become valuable research if doctors were to look at it. But was it a good thing to let her friend become a research object?

She thought silently.

"It should be like this until the medicine wears off."

"In other words, it'll be cured today at the latest?"

"I think so."

Leerin nodded. Nina on the other hand said 'play with me', shaking Layfon's shoulder. She felt like there was a feeling made her unable to laugh about this, and she didn't want to look at the two of them.

"Speaking of which, why does Nina like you so much?"

"W, why?"

Layfon's voice quivered. He had had difficulty just barely maintaining a smile during Nina's 'play with me' attack.

(Oh my, oh my.....)

Leu sighed in her heart.

Though no one could rationally accept this situation, they still showed expressions of rationality.

Leu drank the rest of the no longer hot tea, restoring the mood.

"So then, our understanding of the situation ends here....."

She looked at Nina. She felt that Nina's usually tough expression had been relieved a bit. Probably it was because of her eyes, which had a feeling of being constantly widened. And her eyes right now had already returned to a childlike state.

Nina who had been rigid and inflexible in the beginning, even if she received a shock and yielded, she still definitely wouldn't have become like this. The current Nina gave off a contrasting feeling from her actions that comparatively were those of a doll-faced little girl. That was definitely it, because her mind had become a child!

Damn, that meant that her mind didn't really match her outer appearance.

.....In that case?

".....Then first, let's change her into a more fitting appearance."

"Aha, yes....."

Leerin expressed her approval.

"It would be good if we had fake hair, the long type, and something like a ribbon....."

"There should be those things in Selina-san's secret room!"

"Secret room?"

"T, that person has various things!"

She replied tersely to Leerin's question. After giving Nina to Layfon, Leu and Leerin left from the living room together.

Other than the room that Selina slept in, she also used a room that was approximately adjacent to it. Leu had opened the door to the neighboring room without permission before.

There were great amounts of clothes stashed there, cosmetics, and other small objects.

"H, how is there so much?"

"It's from various places, but maybe it's better not to know, and it would be especially troublesome if Nina learned about it."

"Eh!?"

Pushing the conversation to the side, Leu led the way into the room.

There were clothes on the hangers, from various school uniforms to party dresses. Even more incredible, the cute clothing that Leu and Leerin needed were all placed there as well. Though the sizes of those clothes were fit to Selina, there shouldn't be any problems other than a difference in height.

The hangers on the other side had various kinds of fake hair.

"Then, let's take some things and go!"

Leerin had harbored some doubts at first, but after seeing the things in the room, she became eager.

Afterwards, after some time had passed.

"So satisfying!"

Happily looking at her results, Leu wiped off the sweat from her forehead.

The source of the sweat was her itchy cheeks.

"Indeed!"

Leerin also showed a refreshing expression.

"Nn, can we end here then?"

The exhausted Layfon confirmed, his face already full of weariness.

His face and forehead were covered in red scratches, and moreover he had been hit a few times. It was all Nina's doing when she had been being rowdy. Layfon who had to control her had been the one who was hit the most.

Nina who had been cooperative when they were changing her clothes had become rowdy when they tried to put the fake hair and makeup on her.

Because of that, Leu and Leerin had also been scratched.

Right now, Nina wore a pink dress. In order to let her calm down a bit, they had hurriedly taken the doll Mitessha^[4] from her room. Even so, she still looked at them with a dissatisfied expression.



They used a ribbon to tie up the long fake hair. More incredibly, they had used makeup to emphasize the softness of her face. Leu originally didn't really use makeup, but she had learned a few techniques from her friends who worked at beauty parlors.

"Maybe black is a bit more fitting."

"No no, it's fitting, it's fitting. The normal Nina definitely wouldn't wear pink clothes!"

"Nn, nn- indeed."

Though they hadn't spent many days together, Leerin had also never imagined Nina wearing anything pink.

".....Uh, won't Nina get mad if she recovers?"

"She'll get mad! But, because of that, we can only do this now! Nina-chan, how about you change into this?"

Leu happily took out a different garment.

".....Don't wanna!"

Nina pouted.

"Aww, don't say that!"

"Don't--wanna--!"

This time was even stronger, and she resisted with her teeth bared.

Then, Nina hid behind Layfon's body.

"No! I wanna play--"

"But, you should wear this!"

"No--, play! Play play play-----!!"

The back of Layfon's clothes was grabbed and shaken.

"Then, hold on....."

"Play, play, I want to play-- play!"

Shake shake.

"Then, please....."

Shake shake shake shake.

"Uh....."

Shake shake shake shake shake shake shake.....

Wobble wobble.....

"Uwah!"

At that extremely high-speed movement, even a Military Artist would be affected.

".....Are you okay?"

Nina tilted her head with a naive expression, looking at Layfon who had fallen on the bed, almost unconscious.

A smile slowly emerged on Layfon's face.

"Then, will this time be enough?"

"This time?"

"Nn, this time."

"Okay!"

She smiled magnificently at Layfon, and Leerin who witnessed this with a quizzical expression became even more speechless.

In that time, it suddenly happened.....

Of course, Nina didn't have any bad intentions. She acted rapidly because she was guided by childish thinking. That action would be far too abrupt for an adult consciousness.

"I love you Layfon--!!" Fully enunciated words.

Peck--

A momentary thing.

"?!"

"!!!?!"

"Wow--....."

"Ehhhhhh?!"

Layfon clutched his mouth, his face completely red. Leerin covered her mouth to try to stop herself from making a sound. Nina smiled a bit shyly, and though a childish smile emerged, one could really still see the figure of an adult. It was very devious. [5]

(Well, is it almost impossible to tidy up this chaotic situation now?)

Leu felt that.

Layfon was muttering something to the side. Her heart was that of a child regardless of her appearance, that was how things were. Child child child..... Uh, wasn't that muttering Layfon very suspicious?

Leerin had almost recovered from the shock. No, how would things be if she had to turn to other things because she was unable to withstand that shock? Leerin's shoulders quivered, and she glared at Layfon.

Of course, the chaotic situation wouldn't end with this, as she was still an eighteen-year-old Military Artist. The strength that body contained wasn't on par with a child.

Maybe her child self was also shy. Maybe she was shy, and wanted to escape from there.

Nina suddenly stood up.

"Then, bath!"

While shouting out, Nina did something very serious.

The dress with many buttons was ripped apart by Nina's brute force. The buttons flew everywhere.

In other words.....

"Wah--"

"Layfon, eyes!"

After Leerin's sharp voice, Layfon closed his eyes.

The sounds of the flying buttons bounding on the bed, the sounds of threads breaking, the sounds of torn cloth, the sounds of Mitessha rolling on the bed. The undecorated underwear that was exposed, and the chest fuller than Leu's. The panties hidden underneath the clothing were really quite simple.

.....Because she was a child, she didn't have enough of a sense of shame.

"Hurry up and get out!"

Layfon whose eyes were tightly shut was kicked towards the door by Leerin.

The heat in the bathroom condensed into droplets on the ceiling, and fell back into the bath.

The sighs of two people added an imposing atmosphere in the noise-filled bathroom, but they were drowned out by the noise in the bathroom, even if it was high-pitched.

During the bath.....

"Layfon too!"

Nina had advocated that until the end, but that kind of action couldn't be permitted.

For Layfon who showed an expression like 'how could I bathe with her', and for Nina when she recovered, and also for Leerin who was caught in a dilemma between the two.

In any case, it was for the happiness of everyone present.

In order to let the dissatisfied Nina calm down, Leu and Leerin entered the bathroom together.

Right now, Leerin was washing Nina's hair.

"How skillful!"

While Nina whose eyes were desperately shut had her hair full of bubbles, Leu exclaimed.

"It's because I'm used to it!"

Leerin used a very normal tone to say that.

Leu had previously learned of Leerin's situation, so she didn't say anything. When she had learned, she had thought 'Ah, so many things happened!'. Leu hadn't grown up in a particularly favorable environment herself either.

The people who came to this city all had their own various stories. There were people like Nina who held strong feelings of leaving and went on a journey, and people who didn't have any choice but to leave, people who left to search for their desires, people who left their hometown on impulse, people who escaped, and people who left their city in order to pursue those who had escaped.

What could be expected of people who had left their home city? It was obvious that all of them had cut themselves off from certain things forever.

Even if it was only a momentary trip.

Leu looked at Leerin. She still had confidence in her observation of others. She was an honor student, one who was very good at studying, just that kind of honor student.

There were also many kinds of honor students.

For example Nina had that kind of rigid personality, so she achieved in Military Arts..... Generally speaking, she was an honor student.

Selina counted as unprecedented, and she was the kind of honor student that made people speechless with her achievements.

And then Leerin's achievements were the kind that could make the annoying-seeming class representatives admit defeat, she was that kind of honors student.

There were many types other than those, and there were a big bunch of honor students living in a nearby dorm.

(Does this girl plan on always showing the expression of an honor student?)

They had almost finished washing Nina's body, and Leu also entered the bath. Leerin was still with Nina, helping her clean her body.

She thought about Leerin's situation. Leu understood what kind of emotions she had held coming to this city. Her actions were already very indicative of her feelings.

Even Nina who didn't think anything relating to those kinds of things couldn't ignore it.

She had wanted to ignore it.

It was probably because Leerin's sense of purpose was too strong. What goal had she had, coming to Zuellni. Afterwards, other goals had been added on top of that, which made Nina's thinking intensify.

Though, with this, her thinking had become rigid. Because Nina's heart wasn't soft enough!

One could also say that she wasn't flexible. She didn't care about things other than what she was doing, and didn't observe them. It was as if her consciousness was led by an extremely strong goal, and she constantly corrected her path.

The strange thing was, the feelings from Nina and Layfon were similar. Leu didn't understand that part.

(But..... even if she hides it, nothing will change.)

Like today. Something extremely abnormal had happened, and Nina's rigid outer layer had been stripped off, and the feelings in her heart had been expressed without leaving anything behind!

She hadn't been able to forget about that scene.

(Aah, she's smiling.)

Her cheeks were dimpled, and Nina's mouth was curved in a recognizable smile.

".....What is it?"

Leerin showed surprise. Nina was washing the bubbles off of her head.

"Nothing~~"

The warm bath water increased her fatigue, and Leu stretched the top of her body out of the tub.

Nina who had washed off the bubbles jumped into the tub all at once. This bathtub was actually quite large, enough to let Nina move around. Because of the flexible drainage system, the level of water in the bath hadn't risen too high.

She splashed around a lot of water, and was yelled at by Leerin. Nina ignored Leerin's reproaches, continuing to play around in the bath.

There was no way anyone would be unable to read Nina's current attitude. How sad, girls were always growing and changing unlike guys who stayed the same for a long time. Because Leu understood this, Leerin also should have understood.

She had feelings towards Layfon. That was a realization that the normal Nina had covered up. Those feelings had been kept hidden through now, but Leu thought that Nina couldn't keep going on like that.

Why would she come to Zuellni? And what if she continued showing feelings for Layfon?

(How would things become?)

Though Nina's thoughts might become chaotic because of everyone being involved, Leu still felt that it would be very interesting, and she wanted to see it. Of course, she didn't want it to develop into an uncontrollable outcome if at all possible. Because she wanted to get to know these two people better, but unfortunately she didn't. Right now, Leu couldn't do anything other than feel sorry.

A sigh from the tired Leerin made the water in the bath ripple, and Leu noticed that sigh.

There were three girls, so wouldn't it be good for them to talk things out slowly? But Nina couldn't do that kind of thing.

Actually, Nina's voice was the loudest during the bath. After testing the heat of the hot water, she began splashing around.

"I'm done!"

She suddenly let out those words, and Nina walked to the changing room without waiting for replies from the others.

Neither Leu nor Leerin were able to instantly accompany Nina who had moved rapidly. Doubts just emerged in their minds.

"Hey, do you think Nina will dry her body?"

".....!!"

Leerin's expression went pale in an instant, and she frantically left the bath. But, the sound of the changing room door opening had already sounded.

Outside of the changing room, Layfon had been bound by Leerin's words 'don't come in', and was definitely still waiting outside in the living room.

"Wait, Nina!!"

Leerin's voice sounded a little too late.

Right afterwards, they heard the panicked voice that Layfon let out as he turned his body towards the door.

Leerin seemed to resist the sense of shame in her heart, rushing out wrapped in just a towel!

"Wow, is this interesting setting only limited to today?"

Saying this, Leu also left the bath. Drying herself and blow-drying her hair, she relaxedly looked at the situation in the living room.

Over there, two panicked people were holding a fainted Nina.

".....Ah."

She thought of it.

Nina had originally had a fever. The fevered person had bathed, and even splashed around so much during the bath, and then rushed out without even putting clothes on. Because they had just entered the summer, the nights weren't that warm yet, so it was inevitable that this scene would happen!

It was inevitable that she would collapse.

On the second day, Nina who had recovered to her normal condition didn't have any leftover memories. Was this fortunate or unfortunate for everyone else?

In the dining room in the morning, Leu, who didn't consider those things, alternated looking between Nina and the slightly displeased Leerin.

Dinnertime of You and Me

After class finished, we both arrived at that place.

Not that we purposely wanted to be together. Just that, after school our first activities happened to be the same, nothing more.

I was filling my stomach before work, Layfon was filling his stomach before Military Arts training.

Because our purposes were the same, I recommended that shop.

It was near the closest tram station from the first-year school building, a place that made people suffer slightly when it was time to depart. Because of this good fortune, there were no worries about whether the edibles would be sold out. But occasionally, I would worry about whether the store would be destroyed by somebody.

A donut store.

I ordered the tastiest stone-fried cake. It wasn't torus-shaped, rather it resembled its name in that it was a spherical fried cake small enough to be held by children. Not only did it have a sugary flavor, there were also chocolate and many types of fruit flavors.

I bought about ten or so of each kind. Layfon seemed to have also bought the same amount.

There were no benches to eat at inside the store, so after purchasing drinks we sat on the benches outside the store to eat.

"Come to think of it, what kind of a person is your platoon captain?"

The both of us usually spoke about stories of our work to each other. Afterwards, I knew that the platoon captain Nina Antalk also worked to clean the Mechanical Department like Layfon.

"How strange, Military Artists all get a fixed income. So why do you and your platoon captain need to work those kinds of jobs, do you need money that much?"

"Personally, it's cause I'm on my own."

I had heard these words before. However, they weren't easily understood. Indeed, if things were like that then he might not have the money that a

pure Military Artist family did. But even if he didn't clean the Mechanical Department, he should still be able to live a decent life!

"Also, my platoon captain came here against her parents' wishes, so she has no financial support."

"That's quite tough!"

I felt a lot of admiration for her. When I came to the Academy City, I desperately wanted to have an urban life and adopted a somewhat rebellious attitude. Indeed, I had some altercations with my parents, but in the end they still agreed to let me come here. Of course, they gave me financial support.

I traveled on the roaming bus. Therefore, I knew of the harsh situations of the "outside world". With just this much, I already felt like it had great significance. Afterwards was my growth in Zuellni.

Although I admired the platoon captain's situation, we still chatted about other topics.

We left our individual hometowns, and for our individual growth we experienced a dangerous journey, and only at the end did we reach Zuellni.

But, that was a period of time we had to experience!

Impact of Childhood 03

How was she going to resolve this situation..... Felli thought deeply.

Felli truly felt that it was very unexpected that she would act without thinking. But since she couldn't realize her desires if she didn't do that, then it was all she could do.

It was obvious that the outcome wasn't decided.

An extremely fearsome 'enemy' had arrived.

She was an even tougher opponent than a demon queen - her cooking skills were excellent, her grades were very good, her speaking skills were very strong and she didn't show off. Compared to that unmistakable brilliance, the most worrisome area was that she had known Layfon since they were small.

Assuming for now that her superiority wouldn't immediately dominate, she had still tirelessly made the journey to Zuellni for that person, and that was her declaration. That person wasn't someone who held the fate of the world, nor was he someone in a high position of any city, but rather some orphan who didn't even know his family name, a stupid man who had lost the only glory he had obtained.

She had come for that man.

Leerin Marfes-

Layfon's childhood friend.

Yes, she had come to Zuellni, and surprisingly she had rode the roaming bus from Grendan. Moreover, Karian who was her own brother had planned to let her stay in Zuellni indefinitely, and her brother had arranged for her to stay as a short-term student using the reason that the number of roaming buses had decreased due to the Military Arts competition.

This was all to use Layfon, to increase the reasons that he had to protect this city.

What a hateful plan. But it had results, she could understand just by seeing Layfon's expression.

The evidence was that everyone felt that Layfon's slowness had gotten quite a bit worse than normal, and actually that might be quite bad.

Though, he hadn't had any failures in his Military Arts performance, so no one had said anything.

Plainly speaking, Leerin's presence made him feel comfortable.

So she had to do something! But, in the end, what could she do?

Anyway, it wouldn't do if she couldn't win against her, right? The fact that she possessed excellent Military Artist and Psychokinesist abilities didn't mean that she was better than Leerin.

Then where should she start? Should she first start from studies?

What annoyed her was, she knew Leerin's studying abilities just from the special treatment she received as a short-term student. She was clearly the same age as Layfon, but she was already studying in her third year. How could she be defeated? There was only the scholastic ability test! Fortunately, the scholastic ability test was approaching soon, and even if there was a 'Military Arts competition' or a 'Inter-city battle', an Academy City was an Academy City, and none of the classes would be cancelled, and tests would be carried out as normal.

First place! Felli made her oath seriously. Actually, there were many Psychokinesists with strong studying ability. If they took tests normally, they could easily get in the top twenty in their grade. Because when they used Psychokinesis, they had to gather and analyze a sea of information that would be difficult for a normal person to imagine, and simultaneously busy themselves with sending the information to the designated people. For this, Psychokinesists possessed a mind stronger than normal people and Military Artists, and it could be said that Psychokinesists had genius talent from the time they were born.

In the past twenty hears, Felli never had any trouble as long as she silently listened in class. Actually, getting first place wasn't very difficult, and she still had faith in that.

Of course, Felli was also clear that it wasn't sure whether getting first place could get Layfon's attention, and she didn't have any proof that his view of her would improve, since various people's likes and dislikes were manifold. Though Felli couldn't understand it, it was definitely a fact that there were quite a few girls who admired her brother Karian.....

More relevantly, had Layfon ever thought about what types of girls he liked? Actually, what did that guy usually think about?

So it would probably be better to just think about what most people liked.

So, Felli began working hard towards the target she had set.

If she didn't know what criteria to work towards, then she should first work hard towards a normal criterion! Academic achievement was the best criterion in an Academy City, which was why she decided.

In order to take back the gap between her and other Psychokinesists, and in order to shorten the difference in effort she put towards studying..... Felli worked hard day in and day out towards studying, thinking that it was ridiculous that she was troubled by excellence as a Psychokinesist while she tried to achieve excellence in studying.....

The day of the exam results came.

Because there were many second year students, there were several school buildings, but the scores were only posted in the school building that Felli was currently at. Felli confirmed the reality from the results list posted on the walls of the hallway, and stood in shock.

".....Why?"

Even if her voice was very quite, even if she was expressionless, Felli was indeed very shocked. Right now there only people looking at the list other than those who had hopes to be ranked highly were all looking for fun, and there weren't many people. Zuellni had sixty thousand students, and the average number of students in the six grades was about ten thousand. The results list only enumerated the fifty most excellent scores, and because of this it didn't have anything to do with most of the students, and all they cared about was increasing their rank.

With an incredulous mood, Felli looked up and down for her name, Felli Loss. Even if she knew that she wouldn't miss the name she had used since she had been literate, she still wanted to confirm.

".....Why?"

Confirming that she definitely hadn't seen wrongly, Felli made a sound again.

The bell sounding the start of class rang.

The people gradually dispersed.

Felli's name wasn't there.

Afterwards, Felli learned of her scores from the computer placed in the classroom..... she was even more stunned.

A failing mark, with a makeup one week later.

...What was going on??



Felli's appearance was a bit queer.

After a long absence, the members of the seventeenth platoon once again gathered in the training hall.

Recently, the Military Arts classes here had been group exercises, and the platoon members' joint training had not happened. Of course, if they rigidly adhered to training every day, then it would result in them being unable to perform in a crucial moment. In order to avoid that, frequent vacations were mixed in with the daily practice.

During the vacation, Nina had still passed along the message to everyone that she wanted them to gather in the training hall. But participation was voluntary.

A platoon member wasn't necessarily sturdier than others. One would obvious have to rest when it was time to rest, and Nina was the most clear herself on the importance of rest. After all, she had memories of suffering from overusing Kei while training.

So, the only people who came to the training hall were the leader Nina, Naruki, and Layfon. Felli and Dalshena would come when they had time, and Sharnid basically didn't show his face. Only Sharnid would use his full strength to rest when it was time to rest.

But, today was a bit different. For the regular exams, training had become rest for several days. Today was the second day after the exams finished, and the scores would be given out. Because the tests answers were filled out on a scannable sheet, it was very fast to grade using machines.

Of course, the older students still submitted papers and research reports. Reports and things like that couldn't be graded that simply, so they wouldn't be done during the regular exams. In the end, it was just to confirm how much the students in the school had learned.

Exams had ended, and training would resume starting from tomorrow.

Before that, they would have to move their somewhat dulled body, so that was the plan for today's practice.

"Uwah - Hard to believe it's the last day of vacation."

Sharnid, the last one to arrive, said this as soon as he entered the door.

"You're too late!"

Seeing Sharnid's leisurely attitude, Dalshena's shout was even faster than Nina's.

"Could it be, that you failed your exams?"

Sharnid laughed, laughing while waving his hand - You're joking, right!

"How could that be, do you think that I would do something stupid to endanger my resting time?"

"Ah~ I guess that's the only way you'd study."

Facing Dalshena's gaze that was scornful from every angle, Sharnid shrugged.

"I hope you know that things may not be as they seem."

But that sentence was ignored, and Sharnid could only cast a pitying gaze towards her who didn't make any response. Afterwards, his gaze flew to a place that felt interesting.

Naruki showed a helpless face, and her vision had also overlapped in the same area.

He spontaneously smiled.

"It couldn't be, Layfon?"

Nina also noticed the atmosphere.

"Hahaha, uh, well....."

"He failed."

As she sighed, Naruki spoke for him.

"I told you many times to decrease your work shifts, and focus on studying!"

She had indeed said that.

Knowing his normal class attitude and his quiz scores, Naruki's words were very convincing, but Layfon hadn't decreased his work shifts.

"Really, you're the same as our resident idiot!"

Mifi who had also failed seemingly couldn't put her strength into taking tests either.

"Is she alright for the next week's makeup exams?"

Nina asked, raising her brow.

"Ah, that should be fine. She already found an excellent teacher."

An excellent teacher..... After hearing that, Layfon's mood began falling.

"Eh? Is that teacher really so good?"

"Yes. I want to see Layton.....Layfon's face when he realizes."

Just as she spoke the nickname that her circle of friends used, Naruki changed her words.

Nina looked at Layfon. He didn't seem to understand the meaning yet.

When her meaning was revealed, it was practice was temporarily ended for them to rest. They had taken Layfon's advice and carrying out Psyharden basic training, and there were many things that seemed simple but were very hard to do. It wasn't so for Layfon who had trained like this since he was small, but his companions who weren't yet used to it were almost spent.

Nina notified everyone. Just when everyone had sat down, they heard a doorknock.

An almost impolite knock sounded, seeming as if it hadn't been knocked with a fist. Actually, if training were going on then a normal doorknock would have been drowned out. This was a very loud knock.

Nina said to enter, and the door was cautiously opened.

"Hello!"

It was very quiet inside, and the owner of that voice seemed a bit surprised. She was a bit flustered that everyone was watching her, but she quickly changed the atmosphere, and naturally walked inside. She held a very thick FileBook^[6] in her hand, and had probably used it to knock the door before.

At the time, Layfon had been standing on a pile of hard balls on a wire. The hard balls were positioned on the wire, layered on top of each other. A pyramid of hard balls. Kei flowed from his Dite, and the spreading Kei held the hard balls on top of the wire. This was a use of steel thread techniques, and with a few changes it could be used as training for the Luckens Wind Serpent.

Once Leerin appeared, the pyramid crumbled. The hard balls slipped from under Layfon's feet, bounding around, and spreading everywhere.

Nina and the others jumped, as Layfon had never once failed like this before. He was unable to hide his embarrassing appearance.

One of the flying hard balls stopped at Leerin's feet.

After greeting everyone, Leerin first walked to Naruki.

"Thanks for your exam."

While she said that, she took several sheets out of her FileBook.

"Oh no, of course I would do that if Mifi asked. But rather, will you be okay?"

"Nn, I looked at the textbooks, and I already know the scope of the exam."

Leerin, who spoke while knocking the Filebook, looked extremely reliable. If Naruki's guess wasn't wrong, inside it were the sections of the textbook she had printed out that corresponded to the scope of the test.

"I already completely understand how to teach it."

Seeing the look that emerged on Leerin after she said that sentence, Layfon's heart shook. It also showed on his expression.

It was terror.

Fear.

Definitely, something that was terrifying awaited him.

"Captain....."

"Nina."

Though he had thought of defensive measures, Leerin interrupted him. What a perfect opportunity, this was a strike after she had observed that he was attempting to escape. He even felt killing intent.

Since the decision about Leerin's temporary student status, Nina had been in the same dorm as her, as classmates not of the same age. Leerin got along with Nina even better than Layfon did, and no one could blame her for it. Of course, Nina was also the same. She understood this situation, and was somewhat confused about how to view Leerin.

"What is it?"

"Starting now, we have to make Layfon study when we're idle. Please cancel Layfon's training after school. Afterwards, please explain that to the people who come by wanting Layfon's Military Arts teaching. That won't happen until the makeups end."

"Ah, ah..... then, the teacher is?"

"Yes, it's me."

Leerin smiled slightly, walking straight towards Layfon.

She maintained her smile.

But, her eyes weren't smiling.

"I'll drill the knowledge into you completely."

She gave off the impression that her cold gaze had already pierced through Layfon.



She had been dumbstruck for a while, but in the end the time for training passed.

Layfon had been taken away.

Felli was at a loss. She gritted her teeth. 'How could this be!'

If she had gotten a high position in the test this time, then she could naturally tutor Layfon. No, even if Naruki still relied on Leerin, she could have shown her scores in order to get an opportunity to become Layfon's teacher.

(How could this be!)

She whispered countless times. Moreover, this kind of outcome had happened at the worst time.

Returning to her own bedroom, Felli was still dismayed as she changed clothes. She had stared at the exams on the table, redone the questions, and then checked the answers.....



(Strange.)

More than ninety percent of it had been correct, almost all of it. Never mind the top twenty positions, it wouldn't be strange to be first place based on Felli's calculations.

Then what had happened?

Had the machine erred? Had it mixed her answers up with someone else's?

In that case, it wouldn't be strange for that person to have mistakenly become first place. But, the first place person in this test had been a consistent performer in the rankings. If her answers and someone else's answers were exchanged, that person couldn't have gotten first place, which was strange. Moreover, that person should have felt confused that he had unexpectedly gotten first place.

But, that hadn't happened.

She hadn't heard of anything like that, nor had she noticed any suspicious area of the rankings.

Felli had to rule it out.

"Why.....?"

Alone in the room, Felli held her head. She hadn't been wrong, so why?

If the graders were wrong, then she could appeal. Wait, wasn't there someone around who could cooperate with her?

Right, her brother.

If she directly appealed to her brother, the Student Council president, then the reason could be discovered quickly.

But, in that case wouldn't Felli's failing be exposed?

No, hadn't it already been exposed? She felt that it had been exposed, as her brother wouldn't ignore this. Regardless of how busy he was, he would always confirm his sister's test scores.

What would her brother say?

Suddenly, the things that Felli hadn't considered yet unfurled like an umbrella.

It was very simple for a Psychokinesist to just get a decent score. Their brain tissue had been strengthened, and their memorization abilities were also increased. But, a true Psychokinesist wouldn't strain himself to get good scores. Memorization was important for them in the first place, but it was meaningless to have only memories but be unable to act in a crucial situation. Due to this, Psychokinesists put more mindpower into essays, rather than quizzes. What Felli had done this time was an unfamiliar action in this regard. It wouldn't be strange for her to be glared at by other Psychokinesists.

.....Though it was now after the fact.

But to obtain a failing mark, that was really.....

"I'm coming in!"

At the same time as a perfunctory doorknock sounded along with the door opening, Felli raised her head from the table.

In her thinking, she hadn't even noticed the sound of her brother coming back.

".....What happened?"

Karian walked in with a bitter face. The only thing that could put that kind of expression on him, whether in Zuellni or at home, was probably only Felli.

But, she never thought that he would make that kind of expression now.

She hadn't thought that it would be the same outcome as her premonition.

"You already know your test results, right?"

Karian glanced at the opened test papers on the table.

"I can't accept it!"

Felli immediately replied.

"I definitely can't accept it!"

Her brother sighed, a confirmation that the situation was real. In other words, those test results were accurate.

"How....."

Felli stood up all of a sudden, and right away her feet were unstable. It was almost as if the ground beneath her feet had disappeared. More accurately, it felt as if she had been deceived by something that she had believed in.

She was stopped right before she fell over.

The brother looked at the sister with a pitiful gaze.

"Your makeup exams cannot be avoided, that's all I can say."

After saying that, Karian walked out of the room.

Felli was still dazed.



Of course, she couldn't just stay dazed. Separating emotions and actions was the first training a Psychokinesist had to complete. If one wavered, they could send information that was not fully accurate to the Military Artists on the battlefield.

Felli walked to the table, confused.

As for the matter that had just been solved, she had wanted her brother to grade and score her test again, but Karian was no longer there. In any case, Felli hadn't returned home just for that.

Felli thought that she couldn't just do nothing.

Anyway, she had to find someone else to confirm that her answers hadn't been wrong. In other words, she had to go confirm that fatal errors had not developed in her cognition and understanding. Simply, she had to find someone to confirm whether she had gone crazy or not.

Then who should she look for?

Nin? Though she was a senpai, Felli didn't think her grades were that good.

Sharnid? Same as above.

Dalshena? Her grades weren't bad, but their relationship wasn't very good.

Harley? His brain wasn't bad, but it was difficult to talk to him about any topics other than Dites.

Eri? They could talk comfortably, but her grades weren't very good.

"No good!"

She had counted off all of the people she knew, but she hadn't found a single one that she could ask for help.

Layfon? Even worse, he had failed in the first place.

But, just when she thought of Layfon. Felli also thought of someone else.

Leerin Marfes - The current imaginary enemy other than Meishen Trinden. No, not an imaginary enemy, a true enemy.

Sometimes, she had asked 'why must I be like this.....'. Why couldn't she be a bit more frank with her emotions? Honestly, she had never done anything clearly, but she particularly disliked situations when he was surrounded by girls.

That was the thing called jealousy. Of course, she would know about those things even without anyone to teach her.

Felli Loss, 17 years old, and though she wasn't used to love, she wasn't deficient in her basic knowledge or slow enough to anger someone.

"I can't do anything even if it's annoying."

She had to analyze this from a new angle. But, this wasn't a problem that she could resolve herself, no matter how she looked. Maybe it would be better to try talking with Eri.

".....This is all I can do."

Felli sat down by the table, facing the textbook. The other thing she had to do was confirm the scope of the exam again.

But, the only outcome of this was to further bog down Felli's mind.

Regardless of what she did, she didn't understand where she had gone wrong. After rereading the textbook, she noticed that she had forgotten almost nothing. She had highlighted before this test particularly to make

memorization easier. That way, it might even be possible for her to dictate what had been written inside the notebook without even looking at it.

(Why?)

Had she really not messed up? No, it was a possibility that she had messed up while taking the test.

She had done all she can, but Felli's confusion had become even deeper. Had her Psychokinesis ability become defective? She thought randomly. If abnormalities had appeared in her brain, then the brain's organization ability that was even more important than the Kei vein for Psychokinesists should have become abnormal. Regardless of how much information was gathered with Psychokinesis, if the brain couldn't make the correct judgment, then it was impossible to send accurate information.

Thinking of that, Felli felt enough terror to almost make her scream in fear.

She was necessary because she was a Psychokinesist. Though she had come here to give up on her identity as a Psychokinesist, she now felt an inexplicable fear when that time might actually be coming..... She no longer knew what her own heart was thinking.

"Yes, that's how it is." She had told herself that many times.

Yes, originally she had come here to find new possibilities. She had originally been that way, though Karian had forced her into a situation where she had to use her abilities.

She said that to herself time and time again.

"Isn't this an opportunity? This is definitely an opportunity to give up on Military Arts! Finally, I can return to my original path."

She spoke to herself.

But.....

But?

If..... If she were no longer a Psychokinesist, what would she do if she didn't have any other skills?

She thought over and over, and then trembled slightly. What would she do if she wasn't good at anything other than Psychokinesis? Could she already only become a Psychokinesist? Did her life have no significance

other than the skills she had been born with? If that were so, what was the difference between her and a machine?

And, what if she also lost her Psychokinesis skills?

"What will be left of me?"

Throwing the textbook, Felli slumped on the bed. Fighting back the urge to pound the bedsheets, she buried her face into the bed.

Her body began shaking uncontrollably.



She couldn't sleep.

'What a terrible face.....'

As she looked in the mirror, Felli thought this. Bags had appeared under her eyes, and her entire body seemed somewhat swollen. After washing many times with cold water, her skin seemed to have tightened back up.

But, she couldn't do much about her constant headache. Was it only a lack of sleep, or was it produced by an abnormality in her brain?

"It's obviously a lack of sleep."

But her voice didn't have much strength.

She would usually be able to assert that easily, but today she didn't have confidence. This was unchangeable for Psychokinesists and Military Artists; how could they be totally fine after one or two whole days without sleep?

Actually, when she and Layfon had confronted many attacking filth monsters, it had been necessary for them to stay up like that quite a few times regardless.

Then why was she weary this time after a night without sleep?

(Don't think about it anymore.....)

She could only say this to herself.

Felli changed clothes and went to school.

But, however she listened to the class going on at school, it wouldn't enter her brain. During break time, Eri also asked worriedly, but Felli replied vaguely.

She wasn't in the mood to exchange words. Eri was a normal person. That was true in the field of exams, and she wasn't any use for Psychokinesis.

Maybe that way of thinking was a kind of arrogance. But, she wouldn't say that. Military Artists truly had certain things that others did not. Though there was no controversy over normal things, there was a divide between the two sides when it was time to make decisions. They both lived in the same city, but the people who didn't know battle and who couldn't fight were difference from those who understood battle and lived for it.

Morning classes had already ended. In the afternoon, Military Artist exercises would begin. Though, it wasn't a large-scale combined exercise involving the entire Military Artist department.

Felli skipped the exercise of her seventeenth platoon.

She decided to put aside the exercise for now. Maybe today's exercise would cause her to make a worried decision, so she didn't want to go if possible.

Nina had said the day before that they would gather in the training hall today, but this was ignored.

Leaving the school building, she deliberately walked in a place where there were few people.

The devastated Felli felt like her body was heavy. Why would she be this exhausted? She finally understood why she had been unable to focus.

Her body originally hadn't had any problems.

So then, what was the issue?

As expected.....

She only understood her body's situation.

Before she noticed, she was alone in a pavilion of a park.

She looked blankly at the scene of the park.

Lunchtime had passed, and right now was time for afternoon classes for sure. There weren't any other people in the park.

"Huh?"

A surprised voice sounded from behind her.

After turning around, a surprised Layfon stood there with his mouth hanging open.

"What are you doing?"

".....I'm not doing anything."

She had already thought of an excuse, but Felli still replied like that.

Layfon entered the pavilion, sitting down on the other side from Felli.

The backpack he placed on the table bulged from the many things placed inside it.

"What's that?"

"The material that Leerin gave to me to read."

Layfon put his hand on the bag with a wry smile.

"Speaking of which, you didn't go to the training hall, Felli?"

"My body isn't well today."

Felli said this, and Layfon replied vaguely. Maybe he was thinking about what was wrong with her?

"But, Layfon didn't go to the training hall either."

As he was waiting for the reply, Layfon had put on an intrigued expression. That kind of attitude left an impression. Had he been thinking of saying that she was strange?

But, Layfon hadn't noticed anything.

"Leerin doesn't want me to continue training until the makeup exam, didn't she say that yesterday?"

"Really? How incredible!"

Maybe that had been so! Felli couldn't remember.

"Really. In the end, Captain was convinced."

Nina liked rigorous training. Wasn't it very incredible to have convinced Nina? Felli thought so in her heart, but she didn't say so.

"Then, are you going to Leerin's study session?"

"That's right."

Layfon's face lost its vitality for a moment, and it could be described as an incredibly tired expression. Layfon, who basically possessed the strongest Military Arts power, had this kind of expression after just one night.

Felli's eyes widened.

"It seems very strict!"

"It's not a problem of being strict or not. She's a devil, once it comes to studying! Aah....."

Layfon held his head and moaned.

"Reading till I've memorized it completely, and writing as well..... Isn't it just about a one hour exam! It's hell! She thinks that if she can remember it then other people can remember it too, and even if I say I can't do it she still makes me work till the end.

Then, what did Layfon want to say?

Of course, he didn't say it.

Layfon's complaints continued.

"Aah, that hell's about to begin again now. Have mercy on me! I discussed how to escape yesterday with Mifi, but Naruki and Mei both encouraged me, and didn't want me to escape....."

Hearing the names that appeared one after another, Felli felt her eyebrows quiver.

It wasn't funny.

It wasn't funny at all.

Hearing those complaints, Felli forgot about her own matters, coldly looking at Layfon.

"That's how things were for the admissions test to the Academy City. At the time, I already thought I had already learned everything that I would learn in life....."

"I changed my mind."

Felli's voice interrupted Layfon's words.

"Eh?"

"Can I also participate in that kind of tutoring session?"

"Hah?"

"At this time, most teaching staff are in class, and Naruki's also in the training hall, right? What would people think if they saw someone alone here?"

"Huhhhhhh?"

A mournful expression crept up on Layfon's face, and Felli felt slightly happier.

Layfon who didn't really consent brought Felli to the library that acted as the meeting location. This store had many self-study rooms, and the round tables could be used for meetings if they were somewhat tidied up a little. Of course, this was a library, and they couldn't hold festivities or anything.

The space in the self-study room that Leerin had temporarily borrowed was just right for about five people. There wasn't anything in the room other than tables and chairs, in order to keep from impairing mental focus. In order to give a quiet environment to other people who came to study, sound-canceling equipment was also installed, and they couldn't hear any sound from next door.

Leerin who had already arrived was a bit surprised when she saw Felli who had come over as well.

"Felli-san?"

"Sorry to disturb."

"Ah, it's alright. Come in."

Leerin who seemed a bit scared lowered her head, and Felli let Layfon into the room.

"Then, Felli-san is also.....?"

"I've come to help."

"Th, thank you."

Leerin's expression was confused, like she didn't know how to deal with things. Felli didn't know why she was being treated with that kind of attitude. Why, was it only because she was soft-spoken?

"Uh -- well....."

Leerin grabbed the collar of Layfon who was seen as the opposition.

Her displeased expression was as if he were trying to resist. Leerin forced Layfon into a chair, and smiled lightly towards him.

"First, let's review yesterday!"

"Lighten your hand a bit."

"No!"

His request was immediately refused, and Layfon's expression quickly twitched. But, Leerin ignored all of this, continuously asking questions.

She didn't look at the textbook, nor did she have problem booklets. Even so, she could continuously dictate problems as if she were looking at a problem booklet.

Soon after, Layfon's forehead began sweating, and he replied while holding his head, depressed.

They were mostly correct, though there were still mistakes.

"Layfon....."

"No, well, I worked hard, for sure."

At Leerin's cold words, Layfon explained in a panic.

"Then....."

"Wait, wait, it's true! I definitely read all the materials following Leerin's instructions."

"Did you remember them all properly? Did you quiz yourself?"

".....Ah? No, well..... Of course."

"Don't lie!"

His bold words were interrupted.

"If you quizzed yourself, you wouldn't have these kinds of results!"

If soundproofing measures weren't in place, that voice would already have made the librarian come over.

"No, I really did..... It's just-"



"What? You couldn't be trying to pretend, right? Knowing what I'm going to do if you do that kind of thing, are you still going to try?"

"Uh--"

"That's enough!"

Leerin's anger filled the entire room.

Then, the hell began.

It was already strict enough to seem like torture. No one who had seen Layfon fighting before could have imagined Layfon's current appearance.

"Uhh, can I rest a bit....."

"There are still ten problems to answer, that should be simple."

"Umm....."

"Hey, your hand stopped. If you can't think of it, then take notes. Both your head and your body need to remember this information."

"Urgh....."

"If you can't get a hundred percent on this quiz, then you have to copy the book as many times as you miss points."

"Uuuuuuu....."

Quiz problems flowed from Leerin's mouth. Felli watched from the side with complex feelings. Though she had said she wanted to help, Felli still hadn't done anything. But, right now she lacked confidence, and actually she would be a bit hesitant about helping, but.....

It was still her first time seeing Layfon backed this far into a corner.

No, she had seen Layfon backed into a corner before. But, this time was different. The Military Artist Layfon would fight back with all of his might if he were being taught like this, wouldn't he? No, maybe that wasn't the case, but he didn't have to comply this obediently.

Of course, Felli and Nina couldn't do that kind of thing. They would be a bit concerned. It wasn't the kind of concern of being hated by a person they liked. Rather, Felli couldn't do anything if she was truly hated, and she did indeed feel that some hated her.

Of course, after all, Felli didn't know what the people who hated her thought.

However, Leerin had done this. But maybe Layfon didn't hate her.

She had wanted to let Leerin look over her own exam situation, and for this had taken out her exam paper from her bag. But that opportunity never appeared.

The quiz ended.

"Fifty points."

Facing that kind of result, Leerin wrinkled her face, and Layfon's face went green.

"Copy the section that was just quizzed fifty times.Understood?"

"Uhh..... I don't want to----!"

Suddenly, Layfon exploded. Knocking over the chair, Layfon stood up. The pressure pushed Felli back.

"What are you doing?"

Leerin didn't move. She confronted him with her chest out, scorning on Layfon's attitude.

But Layfon didn't truly confront Leerin. He rushed past Felli behind him, opened the door, and walked out. They could hear the angry voice of the librarian saying 'Quiet down!'.

A strong wind blew through the room, even messing up her hair.

"Really....."

After being taken aback, Leerin quickly returned to her senses and pressed down on her messed-up hair. Righting the fallen chair, she sorted the fallen materials on the table.

The fatigue on that face seemed like a reflection.

Come to think of it, she had prepared these materials for Layfon, and been with him while he studied. When had these materials been made? The examination results had been released yesterday morning, and the materials had been completed when they were in the Military Arts hall in

the afternoon. She had her own classes, so she must have ignored her classes to make these materials.

The girl who had come to Zuellni for Layfon. That was Leerin Marfes.

"....."

".....Ah?"

Thinking that, the words in Felli's mouth spilled out. Leerin noticed those small fragments of speech, turning towards her.

Felli was currently facing her back.

"I'll go bring him back."

Saying that, Felli walked out of the library.

She definitely couldn't lose! Felli had said that.

Layfon hadn't come to Zuellni to be a Military Artist. He had come here to find a way of living other than as a Military Artist. But his Military Arts ability had been shown, and things had become like this, become this outcome where he had to accept the regular makeup exams.

Layfon's personality was probably like that. He preferred using his body, compared to using his brain. Did he have the nature of a Military Artist? It couldn't be said, but it couldn't be denied.

Wasn't it a bit discouraging to be a Military Artist every day? But Layfon had stood out as a Military Artist when Zuellni was in a crisis, and the pain accompanying that kind of thing had gradually become unnoticeable.

That was definitely not a good omen.

And also, didn't Leerin also think that? Wasn't she trying to make sure Layfon passed his makeups and worked hard for it?

Maybe she would be hated by Layfon using that kind of method.

"I should just be a bystander!"

Felli who walked out of the library took out a Dite from her weapon belt. The Light Dite was quickly restored. The flower petal-like Psychokinesis flakes that flew from the staff separated, dancing through the air.

In order to find Layfon, the flakes flew off.

She acted without hesitation, and by this time the things she had worried about had already completely disappeared from her mind.



The Psychokinesis flakes quickly discovered Layfon's location. The distance wasn't very far, and it was still in the region belonging to the library. Layfon sat in the backyard where there were no other people.

The entire backyard was covered by the library's shadow, and it was very cool.

"Fon Fon....."

Just as she let out a sound, a tremor went through Layfon's spine in surprise, and he turned his body.

"It, it's not like this! Actually I was kind of just..... coming outside for some fresh air. Uh, I'll go study properly now, don't worry."

At the same time as Layfon hastily made excuses, Felli sighed.

"First, you should go apologize properly to her."

".....Yes."

Felli held down Layfon who had tried to stand up immediately. Then, she sent a flake to where Leerin was, sending the information that she had found the slightly calmed-down Layfon.

"Felli.....senpai?"

"Fon Fon....."

Felli....."

Layfon hurriedly corrected himself as he was being glared at. Then, Felli showed a tiny smile.

"What is it?"

"Nothing, it's just that, could we talk normally like in the park before coming here? That's all I was thinking."

She thought of Layfon's strange expression at that time.

"Do you have anything else to say?"

Felli spoke while sitting next to Layfon.

From then on, Layfon continuously gazed at the scenery of the backyard, though there weren't any particularly interesting places. The backyard had a lawn along with trees that blocked the vision, and also other buildings in the distance. What were those buildings for?

"Leerin doesn't have any bad intentions!"

Thinking of that, Layfon spoke.

"Before I came to Zuellni, things were like this when I was studying for entrance exams."

"Huh....."

"Though it's very terrifying and very toilsome, it's not like that for only me."

Then, he had understood Leerin's point of view as a teacher? Thinking this, Felli was about to get upset again.

"It's just so harsh!"

Saying that, Layfon put his head between his knees.

"But, I can't do anything about Leerin getting mad, right? I clearly worked so hard in Grendan studying, but right now I've become like this....."

"Then, you're not upset?"

"That's right."

Layfon made a wry smile.

"But, what's troublesome is that I have no interest towards studying. I don't know what methods I can use....."

"True."

If he liked it, then maybe there would be something that could promote his progress, right? Maybe that were true. But if he had never thought that way, his life..... No, it would be the worst to compare it to the life of a normal person.

For a Military Artist, it was enough to just walk the road of a Military Artist from the time of birth. But normal people weren't the same. They had to accumulate a lot of experience, and find something that could support their own city life. Had everyone truly found that kind of thing? That definitely wasn't true, and it was very clear to her that it wasn't such an easy thing to do.

".....What would you do, if you don't find anything that you're good at?"

"Ah?"

"If there's nothing interesting other than Military Artists. What would you do, Fon Fon? Continue being a Military Artist?"

How would Layfon reply? When she had considered this yesterday night, it had been extremely frightening. Then, how would Layfon reply?

".....You're asking what I would do?"

"Please answer me."

"Yes, it would be very troublesome. It's true that I'm very good at Military Artists, and I've felt that a bit recently. But I've already begun thinking 'isn't that terrible?'. Well, uh, it's troublesome."

"Then, what does that mean?"

"Uh, but, thinking probably won't do anything about things ten or twenty years later! I'm not even clear on how things will be in a few years. That probably won't change, I have that kind of feeling even before thinking!"

Saying that, Layfon laid down on the grass.

"In that case, I'll have various experiences in these six years, and if I'm lucky then I'll notice something, and even if I don't notice something then at the worst I'll do some program and have a normal life."

"Is that enough?"

"For now. Of course, only for now. My target right now is to erase my failing mark!"

"You're so easygoing!"

He had really changed. When they had just met, she had been able to feel a much more urgent feeling. Dissatisfaction at being used as a Military Artist, and the feeling of being unable to escape from its shadow.

But, right now his expression was different.

What had happened?

Actually, she knew. The answer was before her.

He had come to Zuellni in order to find change. Though it wasn't easy to say he had been affected by something, the things here had caused Layfon to become like this. Perhaps, everything here had made Layfon like this.

Then, had Layfon begun to adapt to Zuellni? Had he begun to adapt to the normal life of Felli and the others?

"You're too easygoing."

Even saying that, Felli and Layfon were still lying on the same grass lawn.

"But, maybe that way is best."

Something that she excelled at, that wouldn't lose to her Psychokinesis ability.

Even if there wasn't such a thing, she could still live on.

Maybe she wouldn't excel, she wouldn't attract people's attention, and maybe she could have money problems. But, she also wouldn't frequently face danger where her life was at risk.

A meager, but stable life.

Maybe that kind of thing wouldn't be bad.

It definitely wouldn't be bad at all.

".....What are you doing lying down so leisurely?"

At the voice that seemed to come from underground, Layfon and Felli reflexively crawled back up.

When had she lied down? She thought of her sleepless night and fatigue as reasons, but she truly wasn't tired at all.

Leerin was mad.

Oh? When had she been staying at such a close distance to Layfon?

Meishen and the others were also behind Leerin's back. Mifi smiled soundlessly, Naruki made a speechless expression, and Meishen was confused.

"Uh, um, Leerin. I was resting a bit, and I don't know why I laid down."

Layfon knew his circumstances, and began explaining about his lying down.

At that time, he made a rare mistake.

Layfon's foot slipped as he was standing up, and he came in contact with Felli's leg in panic.

It was evidence that he completely hadn't noticed how close he was to Felli.

"Wah."

"Ah?"

Felli was transfixed at Layfon's approaching face. Though Layfon was surprised, he reflexively extended his hands to the ground and avoided a collision. But in order to stand up, Layfon supported himself with his arms. But it resulted in his arms that were placed on the lawn buckling for a moment, and Layfon's face came even closer.

.....Ah?

A momentary contact. It had truly only been a moment, nothing else at all.

"What are you doing?" Leerin's surprised voice.

Had she not noticed?

"N-n-no.....nothing." Layfon hurriedly replied.

Unlike the normal Layfon, his physical senses seemed a bit slow, and it seemed that he hadn't noticed what he had done.

(Then.....?)

Just now, had that truly been...?



"Oh? You've rested completely already. Then, this time I won't hold back."

Right when Leerin finished speaking, Layfon began moaning. But Leerin didn't mind him, instead looking at Felli.

In that gaze, she could feel a pressure that didn't need to be explained.

"Felli-san too, come help this time. Everyone's come and you have such good scores."

"Ah?"

She naturally began a different topic, so had Leerin really not noticed? Knowing this, Felli tilted her head.

"This, isn't it quite amazing?"

Leerin had an answer sheet in her hand. That was the exam that Felli had taken out of her bag, the backup answer sheet that Felli had put her preliminary answers on. Felli had messed up, so she had taken out the paper she had written answers on.

"Isn't this full points? With such good scores, you definitely have to help properly!"

Leerin's voice was very loud, since there was no longer any concerns like inside the library.

But, right now, Felli didn't have that kind of thing in her mind.

When she saw the exam, the troublesome feelings from before had all emerged.

And then, full points.

Leerin had assured her.

That meant, Felli's brain didn't have any problems.

Felli lowered her head in relief, Ah, it's not a problem with me.

For now, it was enough to realize this.

Also, not one had noticed. No one, Leerin or the three people behind her, had noticed.

Then, this was very good. Because no one would hold any malice.

"In that case, I can."

Felli stood up. Her mood was joyous. Though she was a bit tired, she felt extremely joyous.

Of course, it wasn't just that.

Isn't shock therapy the best?

A simple fact.

But it was indeed a fact full of impact.

It had blown away all of her troubles.

(Ah, people are such simple beings.)

"F.....Felli-senpai?"

Layfon looked over with an unstable expression. What kind of meaning was contained in that confused gaze?

"Nn, I'll come help. I really think that it's bad to fail."

"Huh?"

"You can't have a failing mark, right?"

Felli said this. Layfon lowered his head without saying anything else.

Felli felt extremely sorry for him.

Then, she decided it was unnecessary to be concerned.



Afterwards, the day of makeups came. Layfon was ecstatic that he had survived the week of hell in order to erase his failing mark -- tears even came out. He and Mifi celebrated with hands clasped.

Of course, Felli had easily completed the makeups.

Incidentally, the reason behind her failing was that she had shifted the answers. [7]

She hadn't had enough rest, and in her lack of focus she had erred in filling out the answer sheet.

Nighttime of You and Me

After work, I saw that person on the road back to my dormitory.

I was surprised. No, it deserved surprise.

For a long time, I had known that I lived in the same district as that person. However, I had never seen him in the period of time when I returned to my dorm.

He..... Layfon was walking with another girl.

Should I be surprised or not?

Layfon's popularity was high, that didn't even need to be considered. But, considering that guy's character, this kind of result was very strange.

However, if you carefully considered it, another possibility emerged. The figure behind him - the small figure one head shorter than Layfon's above average height. That beautiful girl who was several times more famous than the most popular Meishen Trinden from our class, The Student Council President's little sister, the seventeenth platoon's Psychokinesist.

She belonged to the seventeenth platoon. If their homes were in the same direction, it wouldn't be too strange for them to return together.

However, what I saw was not like that.

That figure which I could one look at from afar was totally rigid.

If only they made some sound. Then, I could get closer to look at her. Not that I had feelings for her, I simply wanted to look at her.

What should I do..... Just as I was so troubled. Layfon stopped his footsteps and looked this way.

"Ah, you're returning now?"

He happily said. She also looked this way. Those eyes which could only be seen in a dream instantly penetrated my heart.

It wasn't a feeling of love, I just got a little carried away.

I don't know why, but later three people arrived at a nearby vending machine.

This was a place to rest and satiate oneself during the night. From the several vending machines standing side by side, we bought snacks and juice.

Felli-sempai only selected juice and a chocolate snack, but Layfon and I wanted to enjoy the atmosphere of a late-night meal, and heaped a table full of a small mountain of food.

.....Even if we made a great heap, I had no confidence that we could finish it.

In front of me was that beautiful girl. Just looking at her made my stomach feel like I had already eaten quite a few things. Nervousness, nervousness decreases the appetite. But I had bought them according to the amount I usually bought.

Felli-sempai's light voice, a voice that seemed to have been crafted like a beautiful gem, made my body tremble.

"Hey, this can't be normal, right?"

Relying in a bland manner, that guy who was opening the package of a snack was broken in some area, as expected. For example, a male's response function towards girls - that kind of area.

Layfon and Felli-sempai were talking. For Felli-sempai's soft-spoken discourse, Layfon matched her tone. I reveled in Felli-sempai's voice, while at the same time worrying that sempai would say "Why is this kind of guy here!" or that kind of thing.

Nothing of the sort happened.

Felli-sempai is a good person!

For this, I felt happy.

After we finished eating the snacks, Felli-sempai separated from us.

As for me, I felt that it was a failure to return with Layfon.

"You, why don't you even ask me before eating everything! You unfair person!"

"Wah!"

So terrible, must you destroy everything before you are satisfied!

Happy Birthday

What exactly is this, reality or dreamland? - There were some times when he asked himself this sort of thing.

Right when he woke up, he thought about this. He had just had a dream that left a strong impression, and his drowsiness seemed rather deep.....

In other words, he welcomed in the morning of the second day in the worst condition.

But, however he looked, it resembled a dream.

Why was he Layfon Alsief, eh? He didn't understand the reasons. But, if perhaps he weren't Layfon Alsief, he had no idea who he was.

So, might as well assume he was Layfon Alsief.

"Ah-....."

The confused Layfon Alsief got out of bed, opening the curtains. The strong sunlight stimulated his eyes, and also stimulated his chaotic sense of awareness.

Even if it was morning, the weather was very hot, even considering that the sunlight was directly entering his room. The most important factor was that the city had just entered summer.

He glimpsed a slightly familiar scenery from the window, and Layfon returned to bed again. He didn't know why, but his body today seemed like it was in poor condition.

Layfon didn't really like this kind of uncertain feeling. Even if he felt annoyed at the fact that he was Layfon Alsief, he still had to honestly receive it, and had to simply recall some of Layfon Alsief's paths traversed during life. Growing up as a Grendan Military Artist, and becoming a Heaven's Blade Successor. Due to some situation he had to hand back the Heaven's Blade, and afterwards came to the Academy City Zuellni.

He didn't have parents, nor did he even know whether any blood relatives of him existed. He was picked up during childhood, and was then raised in an orphanage. Even though he had never thought he was an unfortunate person, it was because till this day he still had not seen any other relative of himself - that was the reason Layfon told himself.

This kind of suffering would linger no matter what.

"Ah-....."

Layfon turned over on the bed, and stared at the ceiling with an expression of loss. However, his expression did not show any distress towards his real life.

Reality would not develop according to his thoughts; he had become accustomed to this long ago.

Even though he was usually very spirited when he woke up, but occasionally, there were these kinds of situations where his body was off. In an urgent situation, perhaps he had no choice but to suppress this kind of phenomenon. But in this kind of time when there was no urgency, sometimes he felt like his whole body was fatigued.

Layfon believed this was a signal that his body was searching for rest. But his body was not particularly weak, or had any bad omens of illness. Probably, it was a precaution against gaining such conditions or something like that.

"Guess I'll sleep-"

That was it.

That normally tight expression (some exaggeration) loosened, and closed lips flared in a "Fnyaaaah fnyaaaah" (snoring sfx).

If this were at Grendan, Leerin would definitely have burst open the door and yelled "Get up already!", and afterwards would have kicked him and his brothers awake one after another.

However, this was the Academy City Zuellni, and moreover a male dorm. Not to mention he was alone in a two-person room. Not only could the childhood friend who had always taken care of him not enter this room, but someone who could hinder his sleep didn't exist at all.

Today there was no class, nor was there cleaning of the Mechanical Department at night. Even if he so lazily passed through the entire day, no one had reason to blame him.

No one had reason to blame him.....?

".....Ah!"

He thought of it.

Layfon who had been snoozing in his room the previous second hurriedly climbed out of his bed, took off his sleeping clothes, and changed into proper clothing..... and afterwards promptly left.



The situation should be traced back several days.

"Party?"

Hearing these plans from the Psychokinetic flake, Sharnid turned his head.

The location was the fourth-year dormitory's rooftop, on top of the storage tank. Above Sharnid who was lying down, floated a petal-shaped Psychokinesis flake, whose light melted gradually into the sun's.

The voice that was heard from the flake was Nina's.

Nina was currently in the second-year school building, or more accurately, in the central court of the second-year school building. This place had vending machines, and the surroundings had lots of benches.

Next to her was Felli.

In Felli's hand was restored a Light Dite, and flakes were floating around.

"Oho~~ I like parties very much."

".....Let me say this, this party is definitely not intended for you."

"It's not bad to do that once in a while! That kind of big surprise....."

"Isn't it needless for you to say so?"

"Ah, I guess."

"Then, what kind of party is it?"

The one who opened his mouth during that bored conversation was Harley, who was in the lab at the Alchemy Building.

"It's to celebrate Layfon and Leerin's birthday!"

"Uwah! At this age, and still doing birthday parties!"

"Ah? Before I came to Zuellni I held one every year!"

This new voice was Dalshena's.

"I as well!"

Nina also showed her approval, and afterwards Sharnid's bored voice sounded.

"I can't take it, the thoughts of little girls....."

"What did you say!?"

"Well~~ okay. Anyway, why did you suddenly start this topic? And why use this kind of secret method of meeting?"

"If it were in the Military Arts building, Layfon would definitely be there. Also, isn't it pretty tough to gather you all together?"

Nina stared at the flake. Felli at her side put on a sort of "nothing to do with me" expression, and afterwards from Sharnid's side came a short laugh as a reply, nothing more.

Originally, she also wanted to listen to Naruki's opinion. But she and Layfon were in the same class, and to send a flake over without being detected by Layfon was too difficult, so there was no way to let her join this discussion.

"Ah, enough!"

In order to reverse the atmosphere, Nina began narrating the reasons for the situation.

The beginning was during the previous few days when they were chatting in a dormitory. In an antechamber, an incidental chat of no significance stumbled upon it.

No birthday.

Layfon and Leerin had no birthday. It wasn't because they were orphans, it was because they didn't even know who their parents were.

Although it wasn't like the city's society was free of abandonment situations, the moving cities were a type of enclosed societies. Who lived in

your surroundings, what kind of status..... It was probably only the Academy City residents with relatively more mobility who would forget these kinds of things, but in the majority of the cities, personal information was easily accessible. Even if there were abandoned babies, the surrounding neighbors could notice changes, and in many cases the parents of the abandoned baby were ascertained. In this case, the child would either return to the parents, or be sent to an adoption facility. Usually in these kinds of cases, the orphan's birthday could be roughly approximated.

But Layfon and Leerin were not like this. They had been picked up together, and sent to Derek's orphanage. So even until now they had not been able to accurately ascertain who their parents really were.

"At home we would hold a celebration on the first day of the new year, but there wasn't anything we particularly wanted to do."

However, what was said after was the main cause of the decision.

"But..... this year, we encountered some problems..... so we couldn't hold a celebration."

Because other students were in the dorm, he spoke rather vaguely. But she could figure out what Layfon meant by "some problems".

Because Layfon's "some problems" had been exposed, he could no longer be the her of the orphans. And as for Leerin who acted as Layfon's advocate, it seemed that over the years she had not attended the city's organized gatherings.

"Well um, that kind of situation is a bit difficult to talk about."

The member of the seventeenth platoon who knew of the reasons for the situation also used vague words.

"So you want to secretly hold a birthday party, huh?"

Towards Harley's question, Nina nodded her head to reply.

"Leerin already knows about this, and I guess nothing can be done about that. Also, I hope that we can hold this quickly, how does next weekend sound?"

"No problem, but won't it be a little rushed?"

"This isn't anything that needs long-term planning."

"Ah, that's fine!"

The rest of them agreed.

"What about Felli?"

Only Felli by her side remained silent.

"It's okay, right?"

The Psychokinesist sitting by Nina kept a stern expression. However, it seemed that she felt some sort of slight, anger-like feeling mixed in.

Towards the answer that was finally made to the question, Nina sharply nodded her head.

"Afterwards I will notify Naruki and her friends. The location will be our dorm. Our dorm usually bans male students, but this time we have the supervisor's permission. I hope we can put forth effort ourselves for the purpose of laying out the venue, moving goods, and preparing food."

".....Ahh, somehow, doesn't that sound like mobilizing for war?"

"It's not that!"

She strongly denied this point, but the response of the rest of them was a hopeless sigh.

After speaking with Felli and the others, Nina waited until class ended to go to the City Police headquarters to discuss with Naruki. She also had no objections, and her sworn followers Meishen and Mifi would also be active to help. Nina recognized the two: one was the good cook Meishen, and the other was the lively Mifi. Having the two of them there would better the atmosphere!

After finishing training in the Military Arts building, Nina walked on the road back to her dorm.

-Birthday.

Usually, this wasn't a word that required any sort of care. However, Nina had always been in a position where she had her birthday celebrated by others. The only ones who celebrated her birthday were her sister and brother, along with her childhood friend Harley. However, all she had done

was discuss with her sister about what food to choose, who would then act as the Antalk family head and send the food out.

The significance of a birthday was that it was a special day with regard to oneself. The whole family, friends, and Antalk relatives had many different types of people, but for the single Nina all gathered for that day.

But after her Military Arts training had been formalized, Nina changed the way she looked at her birthday.

Most people, especially the people who had contact with the Antalk family, were not there to visit Nina. They only came to the birthday party to show friendliness to the Antalk blood. Once Nina realized this, her expectations and enthusiasm towards birthdays cooled down.

However, before this she was very happy. Her parents, sister, and brother, as well as Harley, the blessings they gave on her birthday would not change. So the joy she felt had not changed, even through this day.

That kind of feeling, would Layfon and Leerin be able to feel the same? No, Nina understood that she couldn't compare her own situation against the standards of others. Regardless of motive, people had at the end come to celebrate her birthday. For orphans, there were those who didn't even accurately know their own birthday like Layfon. They wouldn't feel the same way as Nina about things like birthdays, and they might have some other kind of significance.

(In what way is it different?)

On the hot summer day that felt like a steamer, under the long sunset. Nina gazed afar at the sky that revealed a deep red color left behind.

Those who didn't grow up in the same conditions as I did, in what way do they see their own birthdays, and how do they depict them?



I don't know about my own birth-

Derek Psyharden was also like this.

Not to say that he didn't remember his life experiences, but he didn't have an established family name. He inherited his name from an established surrogate father, becoming a Military Artist.

When he was yet unborn, his father had died in battle. As a Military Artist of Grendan, he was expected to receive money from the government. If his mother relied on that money, it would be very difficult to raise an unweaned child. It wasn't what most people learned about the biology of Military Artists, but the mother bore a great burden already by successfully delivering the baby. However, her body couldn't handle it, and she also died.

The one who guided this Derek was at that time the master of Psyharden. He had grown up in the Psyharden-managed orphanage, and had practiced Military Arts in the dojo. Learning skills along with many other companions, he stood at the position to inherit the Psyharden name.

It wasn't that he didn't know. But, he could find no trail from the information that he was able to enumerate, and that kind of ending was the same as not knowing his own birth.

Now.

After the numerous people who were sent to this dojo to learn Military Arts returned home, Derek stood in the center of the dojo holding a practice sword. He had taken off the top half of his practice clothing, revealing his seemingly reinforced body. A slim body without an ounce of fat. A quick observation would see that that body lacked sophistication, and all over the body were surgical scars.

These were left over after Gahard Baren's surprise attack. More accurately, he had been possessed by a filth monster and had therefore attacked, causing Derek's body to be completely destroyed. Now, Derek trained again from the beginning. To promote growth of his Kei and muscle, this was Derek's reason for practicing at his old age.

This was quite wonderful, or was that truly the case? During the middle of his muscle training and restoration, Derek thought profoundly about the essential ideas of Psyharden from the beginning. Afterwards, he felt even more profound regret towards Layfon's situation.

Afterwards, he entrusted the Dite to Leerin.

The Katana Dite already held no significance towards Layfon - Derek had thought about that kind of possibility. That form of Dite, Layfon had already used at age ten. Now, he wasn't sure if a Steel Dite could hold one-tenth of Layfon's total Kei.

However, Derek firmly believed that sending over the Katana had significance.

Derek stopped his pondering, beginning his repeated drills of the Psyharden moves from the beginning. The timber that surrounded the dojo was all special wood. It was made of a material that was removed from the city's organic protective layer, able to withstand Military Artists' powerful actions. The practice sword that was slashed around sent out waves of Kei which made the air vibrate, and the walls and floor that was trampled underfoot also experienced significant warping.

When there were a good number of students desperately training their Military Arts, this building was calm and at ease. Now it shook during Derek's first practice.

".....Long ago, there was a Heaven's Blade who lived to be one hundred and forty years old."

During what was almost his last movement, he heard this voice by his ears.

He followed the voice.

In the center of the auditorium sat an old man. His knee was upright, hand clutching a walking stick. He was looking towards that direction with great interest.

The long beard that stretched from the old man's chin gently waved in the air.

"Could you be referring to the Spina Noiran Zuolay-sama?"

Facing the old man who had suddenly appeared, Derek put the practice sword to the side and took a proper sitting posture.

"I am. For his whole life he was an active Heaven's Blade, and fought as a Heaven's Blade on the battlefield until his brain died. Other than his brain and Kei vein, his whole body had been replaced. His bones were replaced with Dite, and his flesh was carefully maintained. Afterwards an incredible thing happened, his new body made his power even stronger..... The you

right now and him have some similarity! How is it? Do you feel like you're twenty again?"

"I still haven't reached that extent..... Only, I have a feeling of yearning."

As Derek said this, the old man nodded deeply.

"It's been a while, Tigris-sama."

"The little devil's become an old man, it seems like the old fogey's grown quite a few years again!"

That old man, the Heaven's Blade Receiver Tigris Noiran Ronsmier, grinned and laughed.

"Thank you very much for your help with the orphanage business."

"Politics have their lag, and presumably even the queen doesn't have any sort of medicine to cure that. Probably because she's too strong, she doesn't understand the situations of the weak. Although that's not too bad..... well, even if it's not too good, this old man hasn't come here to bow down and apologize."

"Then, you.....?"

Although on the purpose they were recognized as friends, there wasn't much intimacy in the contact between them. During the time that Derek had rushed onto the battlefield, Tigris had been at his peak. He had several experiences of fighting filth monsters as a group.

The manner he had when he stood on the city's edge holding a giant standing bow in his hand didn't match his manner now as if he would be blown away by the wind, the former was extremely heroic. No matter what kind of situation, no matter what enemies encountered, that posture would not change. The Kei of the arrow he shot shone with a radiance, but in truth, it held a huge destructive power. In uncountable battlefields he had not broken his posture, and was honored by people as the "Immovable Heaven's Blade".

"I have a small matter from the past to inquire about. But without tea to drink, it's no good to start a chat!"

"My apologies."

Derek rapidly put on his upper clothing, ushering Tigris deep into the dojo.

"Then, I'd like to inquire about the past matter."

Tasting the hot tea, Tigris let out a full breath, beginning the topic.

"The past matter?"

"The Meifar Stadt event. That is the name on the record. It was an event that happened before you retired!"

Hearing this name, Derek's expression showed alertness.

"It's not much, I just want to dig up some of that little devil's past, nothing more. Moreover, that course of events has already finished, and regarding the concerned people as well, even if things are exposed no one can understand. Also, that event's happening, isn't it that little devil's mistake?"

"You could say that."

To Derek who was reluctant to discuss, Tigris was scraping together the past. The kind old man opened his slender eyes.

Swallow. What Derek saw was the pair of demon eyes from the battlefield.

"This old man has no interest toward that little devil. However, I must do a small investigation into that event. So, this old man had to come here to listen to your words."

"Certainly!"

Derek quickly reacted to the current atmosphere. He had an electric feeling in his back, and his whole body began sweating.

"It's already been fifteen..... sixteen years since. At that time, what exactly happened at that place? Can you tell me?"



The Meifar Stadt event.

In Grendan's official records, this event's name could be found. It happened sixteen years ago along with a filth monster event. This event, considering the normal encounters of flocks of filth monsters and the Grendan that had abnormally many battles with aged phase filth monsters,

should have been very easily forgotten. However, this kind of event, with a situation where filth monsters invaded the city, was very rare in Grendan's history.

Meifar Stadt was the name of a person, the name of the name of the extremely unfortunate first victim. That person was not a citizen of Grendan, but was a wanderer.

It was said that it was this person who brought the filth monsters into the city.

The roaming bus station, it was this city's only point of contact with the outside world. Following the roaming buses, many people arrived bringing information about the outside world. But simultaneously, news of the city leaked out to the outside world.

However, what that man brought was not only news of the outside world, what he brought was in fact not at all good.

Misfortune and disaster accompanied the roaming bus's arrival and hit.

As soon as Derek had received this command, he had already realized the situation of this event.

Derek Psyharden, almost fifty. Even if he were only the head of a small-scale Military Arts school, he had a solemn and dignified body, letting his surrounding people feel that he was not to be underestimated.

Wearing a yellow colored battle suit, Derek and several others who were wearing battle suits arrived at the scene.

All the mens' suits were the same color and style. But on Derek's shoulders, his shoulder straps were light green. In a group battle, this was the color that only the commander of a unit could possess.

(A flow of filth monsters into the city has already been confirmed)

Derek silently nodded towards the report brought by the Psychokinetic flake. He was already able to confirm this bit without his eyes.

The problem area was along the edge of the city, outside of where people were sheltered. In this area that was encircled by a tall ring fence, the roaming bus station, Equipment Factory, and Accomodations Facility and other buildings separated from each other by a far distance.

Derek's eyes gazed towards the Accomodations Facility. In the middle of the numerous buildings rose a small bit of smoke. From the glass windows, black smoke that seemed to be trying to escape could be seen, along with the raging madness of the fire on that floor.

"Any survivors?"

(It's been thirty minutes since the situation began. In that time, no one has been fleeing from the facility)

"That large of an area....."

(When this event was just beginning, there were already responses of filth monsters detected from all over the facility)

Listening to the Psychokinesist's report, Derek showed a dignified expression. The rest of the Military Artists already arrived at their targets, and the whole zone had been completely surrounded.

At the same time as the noise of a loud explosion reached them, the glass of several windows shattered flew outwards. Flame and black smoke mixed together, rushing out in a whirl.

From the facility that could accommodate a hundred, not a single person had escaped! No, in the first place this city did not have many roaming buses visit, therefore it was very likely that there were not that many people in that place. But no matter what, it couldn't be that not a single person had been inside.

Right now, the people inside must be entirely in despair. But if no one had survived, the people who were ordered into combat here did not have anything to worry about.

But for now, Derek and the others had not received that kind of order.

In this kind of situation which was not terribly urgent, the movement of the city's residents into shelters had not yet finished. To protect the city's people, there was a good chance that Derek and the others were to simply prevent the filth monsters from leaving this place and to prevent an invasion of the urban area, thus they were intentionally stationed here. If that were the case, then this zone ought to be sacrificed.

(Our opponents are a yet unrecognized category of filth monsters)

Hearing the Psychokinesis's new report, Derek's expression became serious once again.

In other words..... he had thought this, that the current situation was not normal after all.

"Could there be an aged phase?"

If it were a normal filth monster, the Accomodations Facility should have been crawling with larvae; otherwise if it had been able to fly through the air with a pair of giant wings, that giant body of a male filth monster would have been seen in the sky. No, if a male filth monster had been seen, this place would have been wrecked long before.

But if it were the aged phase which might have morphed into one of many different forms, perhaps that would be able to create this strange current state of affairs.

If an aged phase were seen, Heaven's Blade Successors would be sent forth.

If it were really this..... the people who were in this zone had been abandoned. In a battle between aged phases and Heaven's Blade Successors, the aftermath would be a mercilessly ravaged area.

However, if they just continued waiting here, wouldn't that be the same as choosing not to rescue the people who were surviving inside?

What was the truth of the situation!?

(Well, currently there's still no way to distinguish.....)

"What exactly is Delbone-sama doing.....?"

Ambiguous words leaked out of Derek's mouth. If it were Delbone who was hailed as the greatest protector of Grendan, every footprint in Grendan belonging to a filth monster of this world could be found.

Derek was not the only one confused, the other Military Artists were the same way.

The order to attack still did not arrive. Derek and the others could do nothing other than stand on top of the high wall looking at the Accomodations Facility burn. A burnt odor began to be detectable mixed within the inorganic smell of the smoke that floated by. To the Military

Artists who had been in battle, even if they didn't want to they knew that it was the smell of flesh being burned. Many of the Military Artists tightened their faces, putting on their helmets.

Derek slowly focused his awareness, continuously verifying the situation.

In the grim case where Psychokinesists could not timely grasp the situation, one could only rely on his own abilities to gather information.

The fire's heat oppressed the surroundings, and the black smoke floating into the sky was added to at every moment.

Towards the base of column of black smoke, near a broken window..... then he heard the slight voice.

"Psychokinesist!!!!"

(What happened?)

The Psychokinetic flake softly replied to Derek's call. Though it was supposed to only be used for handling a large number of reports and plans rather than unnecessary emotions and voices, this time it was obvious that there was a was a bad feeling.

"Confirm again! Are there really no survivors?"

(Beginning confirmation..... Yes, there are no survivors)

"Then, what is that sound?"

Derek mentioned that he had heard a sound. In his kind of state of mental focus, it was easy to catch it.

It was the sound of babies crying.

He had heard that kind of sound in the orphanage, the grieving call for others to protect it.

(Can't confirm if there are any people, this side has no way to check if that sound exists. Perhaps it's a specific function of a filth monster.....)

"But....."

After hearing the last words, Derek waved his arms, giving the rest of the unit instructions to continue staying on standby, and rushed towards the

Accomodations Facility alone - because he could not autocratically drag the rest of the unit into this.

The Psychokinesist wasn't able to discover the noise. Derek had no way to negate the idea that emerged in his mind that it was a possibility that "this is a trap". But, he already couldn't stop his steps. That infant's sorrowful call, did it have that much power?

No, it was because Derek had been in this kind of circumstance that he felt this sort of feeling!

The flake passed on voices telling him to stop and voices telling him to return. But Derek didn't pay attention, using a Kei burst to open a hole in the fire-enveloped Equipment Factory, and entering through it.

Because of the big fire, the surrounding lack of oxygen made it difficult to concentrate. Chemical changes caused by the combustion of gas burned his throat, and the scarce oxygen threw his Kei flow into disarray. Derek put on his helmet, initially worried that this action might block the sound of the crying infant, but fortunately this was not the case.

During the rumbling sound of an object combusting, the infant's noise could still be heard.

"Where is it?"

While he was focusing on his hearing, he heard an unexpected noise.

It was a small sound of trampling on charcoal.

Even in the surrounding swirl of noise, the focused mind of Derek had not missed this sound.

From his back came a sound.

"!"

He restored his Dite. The light and quality in his hand gradually expanded, reshaping. In the next moment, Derek commanded the Dite in his hand upwards.

Because of the light from the fire, the Steel Dite in his hands shone dully. With a strong swipe of his arm, the surrounding black smoke in the area was suddenly carried off. Derek felt that that thing was looking down on him.

Although it had the shape of a human, however you looked at it, it didn't resemble a human.

It was taller than three meters, almost double Derek's height. In its big, rough hand it held a black sword that seemed nauseating, and was relentlessly giving off a great pressure. Its entire body from top to bottom was draped in black-colored plate-like things, but they were not garments meant for battle. Between the joints, bunches of muscle could be seen pulsing. This kind of feeling was similar to the form of the larvae that resembled crustaceans. The sword in its hand was the same, regardless of how you considered it did not look like something that a human hand would hold. It seemed like it was the horn or claw of a wild beast, ignoring function or rationality, full to the brim of a primitive oppressive feeling.

That face seemed to be a carapace-covered part of that organism's body - a place that a person could reach out with his hands and touch it. It was a mask, which had on it something like blood, and the rest of it covered by cracks. In the area for the mouth was an opening that looked as if it had been hacked open. Occasionally, its flesh would give off sound. The tattered mask flaked off, a highly viscous liquid dripping down from the mouth, and a few scattered teeth could be seen.

".....Filth monster?"

With two hands bearing the pressure applied by that thing, Derek said painfully.

It was a filth monster of a kind that he had never seen before. Was it an aged phase? But if were an aged phase, Derek should have been dead in a moment! Even if aged phases shrinking to near human size caused their power to decline, that matter should not change.

Receiving the strike of an aged phase - this was synonymous with death for Military Artists.

"Haaah!"

His Kei density increased. Right after came the sound of friction between the swords, and the black sword was pushed back. In the moment immediately after, Derek leaped into the air, and clenching his left hand released a burst of Kei.

External-type burst Kei - Nine Bullets.

Bullets of compressed external Kei attacked cracks in the armor. But, that strange beast only shook its body, and afterwards charged at Derek through the smoke of the explosions.

Without a basis, without techniques..... the strange beast seemed like a person waving a stick, with the giant strange sword raised high above its head, hacking downwards. However, the power that it had was on the same level as Derek's Military Arts..... No, it should be more powerful than even Derek's hidden ability.

Derek turned backwards, escaping. But as soon as his feet hit the ground, that strange beast had appeared before him.

As the head-on strike flashed by, Derek turned around to the strange beast's back. In this period, he stabbed his Dite into the side of the strange beast's abdomen, and with the help of Kei, gave the carapace a crimson scar.

After succeeding in delivering this strike, Derek reassumed the Eight Pairs stance and readied his Dite. Just then, the strange beast's back suddenly erupted.

Eight Pairs referred to a wide variety of Military Arts, different schools would have differences in their stances. The most representative stance was a type that could be seen in samurai films - both hands holding the samurai sword by the right side of the head, the tip of the blade pointing up, blade facing forward. Upper body straight, feet forward and back, knee bent. Kendo had a similar stance, but in the present day it is no longer used.

"Uwah!"

.....Derek watched in surprise. The swelling muscles burst open pieces of its shell, and from the inside extended things like some sort of insectile gastropod. The first things extending from them were two long, sharp claws.

Those two claws extended towards Derek.

Wielding the Dite in his hand, while simultaneously focusing his power, he attacked the things reaching towards him. But there were eight of these things, and even if it didn't use its arms, it was very fast.

His shoulders hurt. The shoulders of his battle suit had been scratched. Derek drew back some distance, and from the area of the wound, ripped off part of his left sleeve.

The strange beast brandished its black sword and charged over. Derek who was checking his injury already had no time to evade.

Derek's brain was at a loss, and that rough black blade that was not at all sharp smashed at it.

That black sword missed Derek's body, breaking the floor. Because of the excessive force, the strange beast could not adjust its balance, and its posture instantly crumbled.

Internal-type Kei variant, Fleeting Shadows.

He was using Sakkei to eliminate his breathing. After releasing a strong breath, he quickly used Sakkei. It allowed the opponent to feel a sort of afterimage illusion that was produced.

Derek's main focus was at the arms of the strange beast whose posture had collapsed. His feet were standing firmly, right hand holding the handle. His left and right hands respectively released Kei, and around the Steel Dite that formed the central axis, it made a double-helical structure. After the Kei was condensed, it was released in the next instant.

Psyharden Technique, Inverse Spiral.

The suddenly released strike, aided by the weight of the strange creature, penetrated through a gap in its armor. Two heavy spirals of Kei expanded in its body, and the broken teeth went in a rage.

The strange beast's back suddenly expanded, and eight sharp claws that had taken that shock began reaching out.

The strange beast's roar made Derek feel numb. Before the entire body weight of the strange beast assaulted him, he held his sword and retreated.

His breathing became rapid. After using a large-scale Kei skill that made the surrounding fire dance, Derek's body felt exceptionally heavy.

The things crawling on the strange beast's back waved around wildly for a bit, and then stopped moving.

"Is it dead.....?"

No one replied to Derek's monologue. He had released so much Kei. The Military Artists on standby outside should be able to realize that there had been a battle, and perhaps a flake would be sent in to investigate.

But, nothing happened.

"What are they doing!!"

The words that he roared towards the military artists on standby that did not arrive rebounded off the walls back to his ears.

The sound of the crying child continued.

The sound placated Derek's mood, prompting him to begin running.



Preparations for the banquet had smoothly begun.

The large hall of the girl's dorm was designated as the meeting place. With a reception hall and a dining area, this open area leading to the second floor of the student dormitory was originally intended to be a place for partying. Since its construction, it seemed it was the first time that this place had been used for its "correct purpose". Currently, it was beginning to be decorated.

The sky was almost completely dark. They had gathered after training, beginning to prepare for tomorrow's activity.

"As I expected~~ I've also come to help!"

Tables were being placed together and covered with a white cloth. The party items packaged inside boxes had been purchased cheaply by Sharnid.

Leerin's voice reached Nina, who was working around the ceiling.

"Sorry, what?"

Nina was on the chandelier, wiping dust with a rag. Since dust had accumulated for several years, the rag had immediately turned black. Nina

had no choice but to return to the ground before washing it in a bucket and wringing it out.

"This party is supposed to be held for you and Layfon! What kind of a party lets the ones being celebrated help make preparations!"

"But, you didn't have to make this place this pretty....."

Leerin looked at the hall that was being thoroughly cleaned, showing an uneasy expression.

"Isn't this how parties are supposed to be?"

"No! Ah..... maybe to Nina it's that way, but we wouldn't hold this elegant of a party."

"Really?"

Using her sleeve to wipe off the water drops that had splashed on her face, Nina looked at Leerin with eyes wide open.

The sound of a laugh came across, seemingly from Sharnid, who had just arrived shouldering a new table from the warehouse.

"Nina might not be able to understand that point."

"What do you mean?"

"Parties of Military Artist families and the birthday celebrations of ordinary people aren't the same!"

Nina worked her brain, but couldn't understand.

"It's true. Although, compared to doing this in a dorm, isn't it better to rent a place like some store to hold this kind of thing?"

Towards Sharnid who believed that kind of thing would be more fun, Nina shook her head.

"Too expensive. Or could you be thinking of pooling money from the people participating?"

"Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that, right?"

Then Sharnid started talking about topics of money.

".....Unsightly."

One word calmed this topic down, attacked without mercy at all.

Felli was holding a shopping bag, standing at the entrance. She narrowed her eyes with a reluctant mood, staring at the great hall. Seeing Felli's attitude, Nina mumbled a bit, and Sharnid simply tilted his head back and stared at the sky.

Behind Felli were the other members of the shopping team Dalshena and Meishen. Between the gold and silver brilliance of the other two, Meishen showed a rather difficult expression.

"W, work seriously!"

"As you say!"

Sharnid nodded his head in affirmation, and everyone resumed their individual work.

After picking up her rag, Nina's gaze turned to Leerin who was standing around nearby.

".....Come to think of it, what kind of birthday was Leerin talking about?"

"Huh? Um..... We decorated the room with origami, and baked a great big cake, and let everybody eat it together....."

"What, isn't there really no difference?"

Weren't they also using some not-so-good origami as decoration?

"That, I guess, we didn't put forth this much trouble....."

Saying this, Leerin looked around the big hall, and then let out a heavy sigh.

"Leerin?"

"Nnnn, never mind."

"What is it..... could it be that you have no interest?"

"Ah, That's not it! Well, basically."

Leerin laughed as she said this, then walked towards the dining area.

"Leerin."

"I'll go make supper, can I at least help with this chore?"

"Ah, uh-huh. Thanks!"

At Leerin's reaction, Nina tilted her head, and then again climbed up the chandelier.

Later the entrance admitted Harley, Naruki, and Mifi.

"Yaa, how surprising! To think things were like this!"

Towards Meishen who came to welcome them, Mifi said this while dramatically swaying her body. Naruki held a very large item behind her.

It was karaoke equipment.

To find these things, Harley and the others had gone on a trip to a discarded materials facility.

"That place is really a mountain of treasure!"

Harley laughed with pride.

"It's hasn't taken any sort of great damage either, and the data inside has already been restored. It's already pretty good. Next we should adjust the lighting effects so they match the tracks' melodies."

"Wow, wow - super! You really put in effort."

Mifi happily clapped her hands. Harley also showed an elated expression that he usually didn't have.

(But don't think you can get away with adding on some weird functions)

Nina and Sharnid who worried about this continued doing their cleaning work.



There were more broken windows. The blaze's abnormal craving for oxygen hit like an avalanche. He blocked the billow of flame with Kei, and fortunately Derek had arrived at the Accomodations Facility.

The sound had become very close. On the wall was placed the floor plan, and there were doors on both the left and right sides in this narrow hallway. The carpet had already been melted by the heatwave, and on the ceiling smoke moved as if it were a river.

Lowering his body, he continued closing in towards the direction of the sound. As the melted carpet stuck to his shoes, Derek opened the door to the room from which the sound came. Even if a key was needed to open the lock, since he switched on the disaster emergency release function, the door was easily opened. Even if this function had not switched on, he could have relied on his Military Arts powers to break it open.

After the door opened, Derek quickly realized the situation in the room. The window had not yet broken. Other than the hot air and the smoke leaking from gaps, there were no other abnormalities.

He quickly closed the door - Not because he couldn't handle the great heat in the corridor. In front of the door were a bundle of soaked sheets. The sheets were covered with a crimson color. Even if someone had thought to use this to block the constant inflow of smoke, still.....

The sound had indeed emanated from this room.

From Derek's location, he could only see a corner of the bed.

A person's foot was there.

It was a woman's foot. The boots meant for travel were already dyed with blood. In the fire, that unmoving foot brewed an air full of grief.

Walking to the bed, the part that was blocked by the walls showed itself.

It was a very young, approximately just twenty-year old woman. Having been attacked and fallen, her flaxen hair was already scorched by the heat, and great bloodstains had hardened on her pale face.

Her opened eyes looked downwards, showing a relieved expression on her face.

In the place that the woman watched lay two infants.

Derek had initially thought they were twins. However, the quality of the swaddling that wrapped around the two had differed greatly. One was of

fine cloth, this could be realized at a single touch. It was a good of even higher grade than the gloves of the battle suit.

The other was made of old clothes, feeling coarse. The clothes that the pretty woman wore were traveling clothes of faded colors. From this, only this infant was her child.

Then what about the other? Had she, while trying to escape from the room, found this infant in a similar plight?

Looking at the woman's face, Derek stopped pondering, feeling that sort of matter was irrelevant. The woman's abdomen had deep wounds, and her whole body had been pierced - was it by the filth monster that had attacked him earlier? To actually have managed to arrive here from that situation, and escape from the fire exhausted while wetting the sheets..... what motherhood and obsession, and that relieved expression.....

It was like a story of her entrusting herself to the lives of these two..... perhaps that was what had happened.

Derek picked up the two infants in one arm. That resounding noise was proof of life!

Some gas approached from the corridor.

During the explosion, it appeared.

The door was blown open, and the smoke and heat surged in. The one that brought this was the filth monster from before. The abdomen that had suffered the strong attack had already regenerated. Even though its shell was still cracked, the flesh underneath had grown back.



Derek used his free hand to make a fist and released Kei. The window's glass and the wall were smashed apart.

He flew outwards along with the glass shards.

Behind him, the filth monster was in pursuit.

Deeply breathing a mouthful of polluted air, Derek rushed at a speed that would not influence the infants. In contrast, the filth monster's speed was faster, charging fixatedly to chase Derek's back.

He escaped outside the building.

The filth monster was spotted by the Military Artists on top of the separating wall.

The filth monster in hot pursuit of Derek was engulfed in a hot explosion. It received the Kei attacks of the ten Military Artists who were waiting on the high wall.

When the filth monster was blocked, he leap to the wall in one breath, and after giving the infants to a junior Military Artist among those on standby who was part of the medical team, Derek once again rushed into battle.

Noises of explosions shook the ground.

"What's happened?"

With a pillar of fire spewing forth, bursting out as if a water main had ruptured underground, the area of the Accomodations Facility was suddenly painted red.

If the fire was being put out, there would be water being sprayed and sparks flying. But, while the buildings were collapsing and bursting, what was being sprayed were not sparks.

"It escaped to there?"

Afterwards Derek saw a scene that made him dumbfounded.

Larvae.

They were among the scattered building materials, falling one after another, and in the twinkling of an eye had covered the ground. The army of larvae that was like a carpet rushed to the wall together as a common goal.

"Assemble!"

The commander who wore the silver sword gave the sound to attack. Simultaneously, his voice was broadcasted all over by the Psychokinesist. All the people on the battlefield rapidly moved in the directions towards the larvae - gathering at the front of the zone.

Derek also heard these orders. He gathered those under his command while continuing to search for traces of that humanoid filth monster.

There! At the back of the giant larvae army, it was riding one and rushing forward.

"Three volleys of Kei! Release-!"

Accompanying the commander's voice, a salvo of Kei roared out. The impulse produced swallowed the front of the group of larvae. Along with this shockwave of kei, larvae went flying. Some were burst into fragments, some were bombarded flying..... The larvae behind stamped over their fallen companions, abruptly crossing over them.

The rolling Kei wave surged three times. The corpses of the larvae produced by the relentless explosions threw the formation of the remaining larvae into chaos.

"Charge-!"

The assault command was to give a deciding blow to the disordered larvae group. Derek also led his unit to charge into the center of the larvae group. Blade piercing a monster's body, he felt that it seemed easier than before. Actually, these filth monsters had not yet matured into the larvae that were usually encountered. Under close inspection, one could see that these larvae seemed like they had been born in fire, and on their surface there was a sparkling mucus substance. In the gaps between shells suffused white threads.

These things seemed as if they had been produced as an emergency response to the situation.

Derek dashed among the larvae group, as if he were cutting melons and vegetables.

In the middle of his vision was the humanoid filth monster.

The posture of the woman sleeping on the bed scalded his brain. The weeping cries of the infants were also resounding in his mind. The woman's abdomen that was so wounded and dyed crimson..... he couldn't forget it no matter what.

That thing had killed her, had killed that woman.

The one that had snatched away the mother of those infants, reducing two children to orphans, was that filth monster.

(I cannot forgive you)

Derek's brain only had this thought.

He rushed at the human shape that sat on top of a larva. The paces of the rest of the unit behind him were stopped by wave after wave of filth monsters. Throwing out an order to wipe out everything, Derek continued charging onwards alone.

Slashing open one, using its corpse as a jumping board, and while jumping through the air he dropped a rainstorm of Kei.

In the continuous sound of explosions, Derek arrived before the humanoid filth monster.

The larva that the humanoid filth monster was riding was very big, and its outer shell was already drying. This thing was much bigger than even the usual larva, could it be that this was a genuine larva? He considered a bit in his mind, but it all didn't matter!

Even though Derek was on its body, the larva didn't stop its pace. The humanoid's strange black sword was held sideways.

Nothing needed to be said.

Escaping the sideways swipe of the black sword as if mowing grass, Derek attacked at the humanoid's head.

But it was defended against by the claw things from the back of its body.

The black sword full of brute force, along with the four flexible and quick appendages caused successive continuous coordinated attacks to bounce aside Derek's blade. He could only expeditiously evade.

The eyes under that tattered mask had no emotion at all. No, he saw that the eyeballs were in reality firmly fixed in place by muscle fibers, without

even an epidermis. There were no eyelids, and it could not give off any humanlike emotions.....

For a filth monster, that was obvious. However, after Derek had witnessed that pair of emotionless eyes, he began to wield his Steel Dite with extra sharpness.

He caught an opportunity to strike off one of its appendages.

Opening up such a large hole in its stomach had not been able to get rid of it. Derek did not think carefully while he fiercely attacked. He definitely had to thoroughly stop it from moving, and destroy its heart, or crush its head. Even though he had aimed once at its head, the head with no joints had a hardness that was different from others. Kei had scattered, his sword had bounced back, and that had only left a very small wound.

If he truly exerted himself fully for a blow, he definitely would make that humanoid's movements slow down. Cutting off the entire leftmost appendage, Derek began focusing himself on this.

With the arm not holding the black sword the only thing left on the left side of its body, the humanoid filth monster began madly countering.

Black sword slicing through the air with a roar, blue sparks became visible as the Steel Dite blocked it.

Derek who had been at an unerring pace received the humanoid filth monster's sudden blow from the black sword. He stood firm with both feet, rigidly receiving the attack. The afterglow of Kei scattered to the surroundings like threads of silk.

This battle had no audience. The attentions of the surrounding Military Artists were all on their individual opponents.

Though even if he said this, perhaps he did have an audience.

They were the Heaven's Blade Successors who were not on this battlefield. Not because larvae had invaded and they had been dispatched as those who bore the glory of Grendan.

If it were them, they might watch this battle in their leisure time.

If that were the case, then now, they were purposefully looking the other way to shelter the humanoid that was attacking Derek. Their purpose and intent were all accurately deciphered and easily read.

The opportunity arrived!

That moment, Derek assumed the stance of a deciding blow, injecting powerful amounts of Kei into the Steel Dite.

External-type Kei variant, Wicked Strike.

This was a Kei technique to destroy weapons. A small amount, in the moment the Dite and the black blade came in contact a small amount of Kei was injected. It was only necessary to let a small amount of the hardness go missing, and in that moment, the weapon would break like a chain reaction as if it were glass.

"Haah-

Internal Kei variant, Sound of War.

Giant waves of sound erupted that severely vibrated the atmosphere, and the fragments of the black sword flew towards the humanoid filth monster. Even if it couldn't damage the humanoid filth monster who was wrapped in its armor, in this kind of situation where its weapon was broken, form collapsed, and a rain of pieces coming down, its vision would definitely be hindered.

Derek leaped up.

He jumped past the humanoid filth monster's head, landing at its back, and the remaining appendages simultaneously cut at him.

The humanoid filth monster gave off a roar like a lamentation, but with its form collapsed, it could not turn its body in time.

When the filth monster turned, Derek had already completed his preparations.

The Steel Dite was at the left of his waist, his left hand tightly gripping the sword's handle.

A form for drawing the sword.

His left and right hands had finished gathering Kei and were united on his sword.

Psyharden Technique, Flame Cut.

That moment, flame spilled forth from the blade. This was not flame due to Kei that had been refined, it was flame from the Kei generated by his left and right hands colliding with each other, covering the entire sword. When the pressure released inside was released, wind burst forth.

Simultaneously, the blade cut towards the humanoid at a slanted angle.

A deep line was cut across the carapace. After many cracks were produced, the effects of the Kei stopped.

Derek's feet strode forth another step.

Psyharden Technique, Flame Weight.

The vibrating flame that wrapped the sword changed its focus, turning downwards.

Along the cut lines of the sword, the filth monster's shell was smashed. The sword deeply cut into flesh, and soon after, bodily fluids sprayed out between the gaps in its outer layer.

The humanoid's heart had been destroyed.

After that-

Having not yet disposed of the falling filth monster, Derek began his next move.

The sword that had been brought down was raised back up. One foot was on the chest of the fallen filth monster. His stomp accompanied by Kei expanded the wound, damaging its internal organs. The giant shock even broke the legs of the larva under his feet.

The larva whose legs had been broken slipped on the ground, and Derek who was on its body began to sway.

However, not even an additional quiver could be seen in the sword that was wielded. The straight tip extended for the humanoid's head.

Kei was released again, and at the same time.....

The fallen humanoid growled. On the two stopped, cut-open sides of its body, its arms began to move once again. It felt like it wanted to beat Derek to death.

Derek's two eyes saw this attack, but his body did not begin any motions to evade. The sword continued towards the humanoid filth monster's head, jabbing mercilessly towards the ground.

Psyharden Technique, Uprooting the Waves.

The blade was inserted into the strange mouth of that humanoid, and the teeth that the blade encountered were broken off instantly. The cold Dite was thrust deeply into the mouth.

Immersive destruction. From the Steel Dite poured Kei that flowed past the blade, invading the brain cells of the filth monster. After a short while, the explosion whipped up hurricane-like winds that began to rage.

The pair of arms crossing above Derek's back were forcefully opened, and dropped on the back of the larva.

The plating on its head had not been destroyed, but the originally cracked mask had been broken. Body fluids and other things spilled out from there. The sword pierced the skin of the larva underfoot, thrusting deeply into its body. Due to the influence of his damaging penetration, body fluids sprayed from all over the larva's body, and it stopped moving completely.

"Enemy, I have taken my revenge!"

Looking down upon the corpse that he had mercilessly destroyed, Derek said this.

The woman's relieved expression and the infants' cries still mingled in his heart.



Leerin was already waiting on one side in that place which was hastily reaching convergence.

"So slow!"

"Uuu, sorry!"

The place in front of her was the tram station by the road. Nearby was a fountain that the Architecture students built during their graduation.

A lion with the lower body half of a fish, that kind of fictional creature was endlessly spitting out water. In the place that had been made the meeting place, several people sat in front of the fountain.

In the surroundings of the fantasy creature spraying water were carvings that simulated waves. In the middle there had been placed a clock that seemed as if it would be swallowed by the waves.

It had just reached the appointed time..... Even if he wasn't late, Leerin was still annoyed.

There was still some time till lunch. However, right now, if one were to enter a store to eat lunch, it wouldn't be too strange of a thing. He looked at the time, and looked at the upset Leerin. He realized she was upset at his appearance.

"What, you haven't fixed your bed hair?"

"Uh....."

Seeing Leerin's gaze, Layfon put his hand on his head. Because he had waited until the last moment, he had not had any time to be concerned about his hair.

"Clothes..... hm, this should be fine!"

After fixing his hair, she examined Layfon's entire appearance. For whatever reason, today's examination seemed relatively strict.

"Um, is there anything going on today?"

"Nothing! Just a very interesting movie!"

Yesterday, Layfon had received an invitation from Leerin to watch a movie. Because the city's extremely famous actor Day Mauge's primetime movie had reached Zuellni. Right now, the movie was being released at the nearby theater. Rumor had it that Day Mauge had already died, though even if he still lived, he would be a very old man anyway. However, he had become an actor when he was young. He had brought his excellent acting skills from young age to old age, and had seen praise from many cities throughout.

Actually, Layfon had heard of him when he was in Grendan. Even in Zuellni, that man's popularity did not waver.

The works that Day Mauge had acted in numbered more than a hundred. Probably no one other than himself existed who had seen all of his works. The movie that was currently being shown was a premiere, for Zuellni!

Layfon had not known Leerin was his fan. She was this happy?

"Well, lets do this. First let's go eat lunch, then watch the movie!"

Layfon spoke softly, moving in front of Leerin who was following him.

"It seems like the meeting went safe and sound."

Hearing this report, the people in the area silently nodded their heads.

No, there was only one person nodding his head.

"Good, good work. Next, what does he plan on doing?"

The one who asked this was the thin, always cheerful man, Sharnid.

The place he was at was not too far of a distance from the fountain where Layfon was at.

Hiding from the fountain in the shadow of a nearby building. What in the world was this supposed elite platoon member of Zuellni doing?

".....They're going to Mike's Hamburgers."

"What!?"

Sharnid sighed to the sky.

"Somehow managing to get this date, and choosing to eat fast food? How can that be! In this kind of situation you have to choose a place with good atmosphere, and most times you wouldn't choose a place that brings a burden to your stomach!"

"They're only eating before going to watch a movie. You don't need that kind of emotional appeal."

Dalshena, who was standing next to Sharnid, said this. But she showed an expression that wasn't really concerned with this.

It couldn't be understood..... Sharnid shook his head, and said nothing more.

Peek.

Felli let out a sigh.

The preparation for the party finally finished, and now was time for the cooking preparations. In other words, this was not the time for Felli and the others to make an appearance.

"I don't have any cooking skill."

Dalshena firmly declared this. This kind of giving up attitude, declared right after opening the door and looking in, was worthy of envy.

Then, the cooking preparation was left mainly to Meishen and the dorm supervisor Selina, and the other girls would help along the way. The remaining time could be individually allocated to activities.

During that time for individual activity, Felli and the others began monitoring Layfon.

No one had instigated this. Sharnid had proposed this, and dragged Felli into it. Even though Dalshena had sighed, she had still come along. She said she had only come to prevent them from getting carried away.

(What exactly am I doing)

Felli's mood had sunk low. Private use of Dites violated the school's regulations. Especially for Psychokinesists' private use of power, illegally collecting information about others was a felony. Even if she didn't plan on letting people easily see her using her powers, it was a fact that ultimately she didn't want to use her Psychokinesis. Felli's mood would not improve by any means.

After eating, Layfon entered the theater.

"We can't do anything inside."

Felli first said this.

In the darkness, the flakes which gave off a slight glow were very noticeable. Even if the flake were placed in a place that Layfon paid no attention to, in a theater with a big audience, staying between the walls and performing a detailed observation was very difficult. Even if their voices could be caught, once the movie started, she felt that two people wouldn't be saying much of anything. Hence, they would be drowned out by the movie's noise.

So, there was no way to carry on the intelligence gathering job.

"So, how about we enter?"

Sharnid's hand was moved to Dalshena's shoulder.

".....I have no interest!"

She mercilessly plucked off his hand. Dalshena looked at the big poster of the movie theater.

It seemed to have some rather moving contents.

"I have some interest in Day Mauge's acting, and none for anything else."

"Occasionally I want to see you full of tears."

"If you want to die, I might shed a few tears. Maybe while yawning....."

"But then I wouldn't be able to see it."

Looking at the idiotic bickering drama next to her, Felli suddenly wanted to return.

"Ah, well, let's just set this topic aside for now. At least accompany me for a meal."

"Do I not have the option of going home?"

"Then, how about Mike's?"

".....Isn't this different from what you just said?"

"Oho, could it be that we're on a date?"

The idiot drama that was being staged again left Felli speechless.

She wanted to sneak off alone..... She thought about it. Felli retracted her flake, and walked after the other two.

She knew the time that the movie ended.

After the movie ended, the two of them had ushered in a strange period of time that lingered in the air. Layfon and Leerin bought drinks, returning in front of the fountain. There was a plaza where one could rest for a bit, and seats.

Right now, if they were in Grendan, it would be time for elementary school to let out. Figures carrying backpacks playing in the park unendingly emerged in his brain.

".....Is everyone still doing well?"

He didn't know why, but he asked this.

"Ah, they should be fine."

That kind of discourse made his heart ache. With the form of her reply, Layfon just realized that she could not personally confirm this.

From that time, Leerin had truly become estranged from the matters of the orphanage.

"Sorry, even though I dragged it out till now."

"It's okay, I think what Layfon did was right."

"But....."

"What, you realized? It's already too late to apologize!"

Her words were severe, but Leerin didn't show an upset expression.

"Well, ah....."

"Really, it's already late. Probably, those children won't know of anything that Layfon says here. The problem right now isn't whether Layfon's mentality has changed, right? And how did those children view Layfon? So, it's fine even if Layfon doesn't care. The Heaven's Blade has already been returned, and you left Grendan. If Layfon wants to do something to repay for his mistakes, it's already enough. The matter has already ended."

"Ah."

He realized, remembering Gelni-san had also said this kind of thing. But he could not stop feeling guilt for his crime of letting Leerin be alone.

If it weren't for him, Leerin would still be harmoniously living together with everyone at the orphanage. At the same time, the brothers at the orphanage looked up to Leerin as a mother and a sister.

"But, I met many people at the new school! There are also interesting sempais....."

Leerin who was almost bursting with laughter wasn't telling a lie.

"Even if it was because of Layfon, haven't I made lots of friends after coming here?"

"Yeah."

"Of course, I was worried about whether Layfon would be able to make friends. Though personally, I made friends very smoothly."

"Mm."

He hummed with no way to refute this.

After laughing for a while, Leerin suddenly fell silent.

".....Leerin?"

"Wah, as expected you and I are different with regards to opening our hearts!"

"Eh?"

Before Layfon could reply, Leerin had taken the preemptive step of grabbing his ears.

"That hurts."

"Listen carefully. Right now are there any of your platoon members in the surroundings?"

"Huh? Uh, there are."

He nodded, though his ears were still being grabbed.

"Why did you hide that!"

She quietly got mad.

"But, it's Sharnid-sempai and Dalshena-sempai!"

He had not seen them, but Military Artists naturally released Kei that normal people could not see. Layfon had caught some of that Kei, that was all.

"And we're very far apart."

Sharnid who was able to use Sakkei could stop the leakage of his own Kei, but Dalshena at his side could not do this. Layfon had first observed her, and afterwards noticed Sharnid. In reality, Felli was also by their side. But Layfon had no Psychokinetic abilities like the Psychokinetic flake had not come too close and the light that flowed through Felli's hair that acted as a conductor. He didn't know that Felli had prevented herself from being seen by him and had purposely allowed the flake to stay a long distance away.

"What, you seem very perceptive!"

"Eh?"

Leerin slowly but forcefully said something. Layfon didn't know the reason, and could only wait for Leerin's response.

"Enough. To think, I was thinking of helping you a little....."

Towards Layfon who still did not understand what had happened, Leerin gripped his ear.

.....Ah.

Ever since those two had been surreptitiously doing something. Felli generated an unpleasant feeling towards it.

"Wah, Felli-chyan, unexpectedly bold, huh?"

In short, Felli kicked Sharnid in the shin.

Even though the Sharnid who couldn't understand the reason behind the unexpected attack was moaning incessantly, he eavesdropped on the conversation of the two. But from this distance, as would be expected not everything could be clearly heard. But if the flake were moved any closer, it felt like Layfon would notice it.

While her heart was contradictory and troubled, the two suddenly stood up, walking side by side.

"Ah? Shall we change locations?"

Sharnid who no longer felt pain squinted his eyes.

"Ne, we should be getting tired soon. Why don't we return?"

Even if Dalshena said this right next to them, regardless, neither Sharnid nor Felli heard.

The distance between the two people was very close.

Before watching the movie, they had been ordinary while sitting on the benches, with a distance that wouldn't make anyone particularly notice them. It was the normal distance of two people who were doing something together.

But now it was different.

By Felli's standards, this was a distance that would spread contagions - converting to units of length, the extent was approximately five centimeters.

If the distance were any more shortened, they would be able to hold each others' arms.

Felli focused her mind.

In order to shorten that probe distance which made her so annoyed and conflicted by a centimeter, in order to get a clearer grip on the situation of those two. Felli began searching for other ways to efficiently deploy her Psychokinetic flake, and moved her flake forth.

Layfon and Leerin were currently in motion. So only focusing on configuration was not enough. She must search the ground and routes by moving in the same direction, and so she placed her flake in a higher place in advance.

"Oh?"

Dalshena made a noise that sounded surprised, but Felli didn't perceive it.

"Oooh, what's that, Felli-chyan?"

"Psychokinesis light? No way! All of your hair?"

So annoying, please shut up - this was not said. Even if Felli vaguely felt that the two next to her had said something, right now all of her energy was being directed towards tailing Layfon and Leerin, and she was too lazy to make the movements to reply.

"Aah, that's too conspicuous. Shena, take Felli-chyan to someplace less conspicuous. I'll chase them and take a look."

"Ah, what..... Wait a bit!"

Sharnid flew out from the shadow of a building. This wasn't bad, seriously begin the operation!

"Hateful, pushing the annoying business to me."

Indignant from the unfairness, Dalshena carried Felli.

This was fine, moving seriously was good. Comparatively, Fon Fon, what exactly are you planning on doing? Actually shortening it to that kind of distance! Stupid Fon Fon stupid Fon Fon stupid Fon Fon!!!

"Achoo!"

He didn't know why, but his nose itched.

"What are you doing, that's dirty!"

Leerin removed a tissue from her bag and passed it over.

"Hah~ what was that?"

He wiped his nose, and the itchy feeling was also wiped away.

"Why do you want to do this anyway?"

Layfon asked this in the direction of Leerin's shoulder that was almost touching him. Honestly, it was difficult to walk like this.

"Don't mind it. More importantly, is there anyone following us?"

After being asked this by Leerin, Layfon concentrated his mind.

It was very hard to perceive. Although it was very hard to perceive, he still noticed Sharnid was moving alone.

(What is he doing?)

He couldn't figure it out. Though he couldn't figure it out, he told Leerin what he found out truthfully.

"Really....."

Showing a bored expression, Leerin deliberated a bit, and then looked at Layfon who showed surprise.

"Then, I want to go buy some things by myself, can you distract Sharnid-sempai?"

"Eh? Ah~ um, I think I can."

Layfon said this while planning. Sharnid definitely seemed to have some reason to tail them. To let Leerin escape notice, it would not be enough for Layfon to just suddenly disappear alone .

.....So then, they had to find a place so that at a suitable time, Leerin could disappear for a bit.

In that case..... Layfon pondered, and after a short period of time began whispering to Leerin.

She nodded agreement. At the decided location and time, the operation began.

Suddenly, two people disappeared from the road.

"Oh?"

Had he fallen for a trap? Though he increased his caution, the place the two had been was a dead end, so Sharnid didn't know what kind of situation had arisen. He raised the speed of his feet, while continuing to confirm.

Layfon who was carrying something at that time began to leap.

"Che, you're exposed!"

Continuously performing several kicks off the wall, Layfon's figure disappeared on the roof of a big building.

"But, Sharnid-sama won't let you escape here!"

Proudly muttering, Sharnid also jumped off the ground.

"Aiya, what in the world are they doing!"

It seemed like she was unclear that he had been hooked. Felli at the beginning had hesitated over whether to choose Layfon or Leerin, but finally had chosen the two males who were rapidly moving farther.

"Hey, can we go back?"

Dalshena's exhausted voice asked this again and again.

"Next is....."

Felli hidden by her side began battle, and brushing the dust off her skirt, she leisurely began walking.



Tigris, who had been seen out of the Dojo by Derek, journeyed home as he was blown by the wind.

The sun was in the west, and no other people were on the road.

(What is it?)

The gentle voice of an old woman reached his ears.

There was no human figure, replacing that were butterfly-like things next to him giving off a faint light. On the road that had no lights and only the moonlight, those things revealed a mysterious hidden feeling.

These were Delbone's Psychokinetic flakes.

"That, it's not too clear!"

(What kind of thing is it? That would also be good)

Tigris began his night with the butterfly flakes, moving forward while looking far into the distance with his kindly gaze.

"It's happiness! At that time during the situation, because of detrimental correspondence, I could only anxiously fidget."

(A lot of big things happened huh)

The old woman had a slightly uncomfortable voice, and Tigris laughed.

"It was indeed like that. Because that place's Psychokinesists, all of them experienced mistaken perceptions."

(Then, what was it after all?)

"Which? But, the Queen's feeling was very accurate! Kanaris also perceived something. For an insignificant flower, she did an unnecessary thing."

(After this, how will it develop)

"How? I don't know! Will the sun continue the way it does now? Or will changes happen? That kind of situation, to an old man like me who lives here, cannot be allowed to happen. Even if it's the Queen's hand which is uncontrollable. This old man only wants to resolve and stop the situation placed in front of him."

(Regardless of if it's now or before)

"That's right! People can only manipulate themselves."

(It's really not like you)

At Delbone's sigh, Tigris laughed.

"If things happen, I hope they happen while I can still move my body. Or, perhaps I could replace my body like the first Noiran?"

Tigris's eyes exposed fierceness.

(There's a great battlefield, you only need to come)

The old woman said this slowly and softly towards the Military Artist who craved a bloody battlefield.



The crimson sun dyed the sky.

"Aha, I didn't think I would be seen!"

"Huh....."

With Sharnid's arm around his shoulder, Layfon didn't know how to respond.

Close nearby, Felli who showed a look of opposition nonetheless walked with them in a row.

He had originally thought that it was only Sharnid, but Felli had also been there. If it had been only him, he could be thrown off. But with the Psychokinetic flakes that Felli had scattered through the whole city, Sharnid had finally been able to get back on track in the end.

Dalshena had apparently also been with them, but she gave up in the middle and returned.

Layfon and them were currently in front of the girls' dorm that Leerin and Nina called home.

Leerin wasn't with them.

He had initially planned to go to the meeting place to look for her, and see if she was still there. But he had been stopped by Felli, and things had developed into this.

"Then, why are we...?"

"Okay, okay!"

Sharnid laughed but did not reply. Layfon was held by the shoulder, and couldn't flee even if he wanted to.

In this manner, a pedestrian reached the entrance of the girls' dorm.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!"

When he opened the door, everyone said this around Layfon, along with the sound of paper firecrackers bursting.

The flying confetti covered his head like snow, and Layfon was transfixed.

The entrance through the big hall had all been prettily decorated. The chandeliers scattered a thin golden radiance.

"Ah....."

There was Nina, Leerin, Meishen, Naruki, and Mifi. Dalshena and Harley along with the two girls from the dorm were laughing while welcoming Layfon.

".....Whose birthday?"

Layfon asked this, and everyone laughed.

"Your birthday!"

Sharnid said while scratching his head.

"Eh? But....."

"You haven't celebrated it yet this year, right? We've chatted about this topic, and afterwards Nina organized this."

Towards Leerin's explanation, Layfon nodded his head with an "ahah".

"T, thank you very much."

"Don't worry about it."

Nina got firecrackers while shaking her head, and her face had a little bit of shyness.

"Now, let's begin the birthday banquet. Ah, but that's still afterwards! First we have to sing and blow out the candles, but careful not to blow the cake away as well!"

Sharnid excitedly called out. On the central table was placed a big cake, which Meishen had put forth her efforts to make. Candles which had been ignited were already there waiting.

Layfon and Leerin, surrounded by everyone, went in front of the cake.

The lights went out.

Only the flame of the candles were lightly swaying.

The happy birthday song began being sung.

As Sharnid and Mifi loudly began singing, everyone else also started singing.

Layfon also sang.

Leerin also sang.

The two did not know what day their true birthdays were.

So they could celebrate at any time.

To represent their real birthday, today everyone had come to celebrate.

The two blew out the flame of the candles.

The food that Leerin had secretly prepared was at this point passed out to everyone.



The two infants in the crook of his arm had already stopped their high-pitched cries, and were sleeping soundly. The young Military Artist from the rescue team had fed them milk powder, and they should be full.

Feeling the light weight of the two, Derek began walking.

After defeating the humanoid filth monster, he had begun to handle the small remaining group of larvae. The dead corpses were thrown out from the outer edge of the city, and then had supervised handling the situation regarding disposing of the smaller filth monster material.

The city's state of alert had already been relieved, and everyone returned to their individual homes.

Light shone from the homes that had been reclaimed, and conversations of the family members inside the rooms could be heard.

"This is your new home!"

In front of his path could be seen a big, white-walled house.

This was a house where those without fathers or mothers gathered.

But, there were many brothers and sisters.

"This family, it has its annoying parts....."

Derek said this to the soundly sleeping infants.

Carrying a new brother and sister, Derek declared to the big house - I'm home.

References

1. ↑ 'During then' refers to when Layfon taught Military Arts.
2. ↑ Layfon is kind of talking to himself.
3. ↑ This is a joke, since Nina seems drunk.
4. ↑ See more about Mitessha in Volume 8 Diamond Passion.
5. ↑ If you haven't gotten it yet, Nina kissed Layfon, presumably on the lips.
6. ↑ Some type of binder with a hard cover.
7. ↑ As in, all answers were shifted forwards or back by one position. A relatively common mistake in standardized tests with bubble-in answers.

Disclaimer

Under no circumstances would you be allowed to take this work for commercial activities or for personal gain. Baka-Tsuki does not and will not condone any activities of such, including but not limited to rent, sell, print, auction.

Credits

Story : Shuusuke Amagi
Illustrator : Miyuu

Generated on Sat Dec 21 18:30:58 2013